

Faculty of Social Sciences
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PASSIONATE MOBILE CITIZENS OR PRECARIOUS MIGRANT WORKERS?

YOUNG EU MIGRANTS, NEOLIBERAL GOVERNANCE
AND INEQUALITY WITHIN
THE FREE MOVEMENT REGIME

Anna Simola

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Anna Simola
Sociology
Doctoral Program of Social Sciences
Faculty of Social Sciences

Opponent: Prof. Bridget Anderson, University of Bristol

Custos: Prof. Sirpa Wrede, University of Helsinki

Pre-examiners:

Docent Minna Nikunen, University of Tampere

Docent Tinna Sotkasiira, University of Eastern Finland

Supervisors:

Prof. Sirpa Wrede, University of Helsinki

Docent Camilla Nordberg, Åbo Akademi University

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an investigation of young European Union (EU) citizens' experiences of free mobility in precarious labour conditions. It seeks to understand situations in which young, university-educated Europeans move in search of work opportunities that would allow them to exploit their education, their skills and their passions, but who end up experiencing precarity. The research is located in a context in which young, educated workers across Europe face persistent difficulties in the labour markets and are disproportionately exposed to unemployment and precarious types of work. Meanwhile, various EU Member States have adopted policies that render EU migrants' access to rights associated with EU citizenship increasingly conditional on their ability to demonstrate employment, self-sufficiency or 'genuine' employability. These policies resonate with workfarist welfare policies that stress the responsibility of individuals in managing the social and economic risks they confront in the labour market. However, they are in sharp conflict with the EU's official discourse and policies, which seek to encourage mobility among young people by depicting it as a means to enhance their 'employability', while primarily focusing on unpaid labour options, such as internships and volunteering.

The three articles that form the empirical foundation of the dissertation build on data obtained through narrative interviews in 2014-2015. Additionally, one of the articles also draws on a complimentary dataset based on answers to written questions the same participants were asked to respond to in 2018. The study is qualitatively comparative in a multi-contextual setting that includes one country of destination (Belgium) and four countries of origin, in which the institutional and economic conditions vary significantly. The empirical sample consists of 27 university-educated young adults originating from Italy (10), Spain (eight), Finland (seven) and Denmark (two). In order to maximise the study's capacity to capture the effects of labour market precarity on mobility, the study focuses on the experiences of persons who had moved to Brussels to work but had subsequently experienced unemployment and worked under precarious arrangements.

In the study, I adopt a cross-disciplinary approach in order to capture different dimensions of precarity in this specific context. The study combines theoretical insights from the fields of sociology of work, critical migration research, comparative welfare state research and governmentality studies, while also contributing to these fields of research. Whilst the articles draw on different theoretical discussions, they are interconnected, and all address the influence of neoliberal governance on precarity as experienced by young EU

migrants. All three articles aim, from their distinct perspectives, to understand:

(1) The reasons for which highly educated young EU migrants accept their precarious working and living conditions, and the implications of this acceptance.

(2) The role of institutions in conditioning young EU migrants' autonomy, independence and room for manoeuvre in precarious labour market conditions, and the possible inequalities emerging in this respect.

A thorough contextualisation (i.e. a parallel reading of the legal and policy documents and the existing research addressing the legal-institutional environment etc.) formed an integral part of the analysis of the participants' personal narratives. In Article I, I analyse the interplay of precarious employment, social and legal norms regulating EU citizens' free movement, and the local bureaucratic implementation of these norms. The results point to a consequential role for administrations in producing precarious citizenship status for EU migrants in precarious work arrangements. Furthermore, in Article II, written jointly with Sirpa Wrede, we show how migration puts young EU citizens under the influence of several welfare models at the same time, making their access to social entitlements contingent not only on the conditionality of welfare and residence rights in their destination country, but also on the policies in their country of origin. Together, Articles I and II demonstrate how institutionally enforced barriers to rights and the uncertainty and temporariness of status often negatively impacted the participants' room for manoeuvre in the labour market, thus further exposing them to precarious work. Finally, in Article III, I analyse the participants' migration as an expression of self-developing, self-entrepreneurial subjectivity, showing how this neoliberal mode is encouraged by EU mobility policies. In this context, the article demonstrates that, while young migrants very often perceived their migration as a means to, or even as the prerequisite for, finding work corresponding to their passion, they could be compelled to tolerate highly precarious and even injurious working and living conditions. All in all, the dissertation is an illustration of the ambivalence of autonomy and compulsion in the context of presumably 'free' mobility. It shows how the participants' room for making choices regarding mobility and for acting upon their precarious conditions is bound to hegemonic discourses and policies informed by neoliberalism. The study also identifies institutional drivers of inequality emerging between young EU migrants from different national and social origins, affecting their financial security and access to independence, their exposure to precarity, and their ability to use mobility to pursue their passion. By acknowledging the implications of precarity in this context, the study advances new conceptual tools and approaches for future critical research on EU migration.

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~~Appendix 1. Articles I, II and III~~

Appendix 2. The interview structure

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This thesis is based on the following publications and manuscripts:

Article I: Simola, Anna (2018) Lost in Administration: (Re)Producing Precarious Citizenship for Young University-Educated Intra-EU Migrants in Brussels. *Work, Employment and Society* 32(3): 458–474.

Article II: Simola, Anna and Wrede, Sirpa (2020) Young EU migrant citizens' access to financial independence in conditions of precarious work: A tripartite approach to welfare conditionality. *European Journal of Social Policy* (o)0.

Article III: Simola, Anna (in review) A Quest for Passion. Understanding Precarious Migration of Young EU Citizens as Lived Neoliberal Subjectivity. An article manuscript in review in *Sociology*.

1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an investigation of the reality in which young Europeans move within the EU in search of work opportunities that would allow them to exploit their education, their skills and their passions, but who end up experiencing precarity. This chapter introduces the research that I carried out with the aim of understanding the situation of young university-educated EU citizens who, after moving to Brussels, experienced multiple disadvantages in the labour market, and consequently became subject to different sets of policies instrumental in inducing self-responsibility in them for managing the risks they confronted. In this evolving context, I argue, arises a need for critical research on young people's intra-EU migration. This introductory chapter outlines the research problem of the dissertation, the research debates in which it partakes, and the objectives of the study. First, however, I locate myself as a researcher with first-hand experience of the topic of the study. Identifying the role of these personal experiences is important, as they have helped me to locate the research in the specific transnationally rooted multi-contextual setting in which the study has been carried out.

1.1. CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN A SHARED MIGRATION CONTEXT

I moved to Brussels in 2010 to follow my boyfriend who had become accredited as a freelance interpreter at the European Union institutions. While I had no career plans of my own that included living in the Belgian capital, my temporary work contract in Finland had just expired and I thought I would give Brussels a try. The very first job that I found was a short-term assistant position in a postgraduate master's course directed to people who wished to pursue a career in European affairs. The course was intensive and the students had paid several thousands of euros to attend. As the course went on, I not only learnt a great deal about the functioning of the European Union and the reality surrounding it, but I also had a privileged view from which to observe the competition going on at the Brussels entrance-level labour markets, and the investments these ambitious young entrants were making in order to get in.

Some years later, after completing my subsequent temporary job and having my first child, I was unemployed and regularly visited the local unemployment office. On one of those occasions, I saw one of the students from the master's course explaining his situation to a caseworker on the other

end of the enormous open office. I remembered that the last time I had heard of him, he was starting an internship at one of the EU institutions – an opportunity many of the students had dreamt of. Seeing him in the unemployment office thus puzzled me. Clearly, his entry into the labour market had not played out as hoped, since there we were. When I started to draft the proposal for the present study, I was intrigued by this puzzle: What does it mean for young EU citizens, who have invested in their education and skills, to pursue intra-EU mobility in labour market conditions where most opportunities are insecure, temporary and/or unpaid? How do they make sense of their experiences of precarious labour and their decision to pursue their careers abroad despite the hardship they face?

Subsequently, I launched an interview-based study on southern European and Nordic young adults who had moved to Brussels with the intention to find work. My research was designed to consider whether the diverging labour market conditions and social security systems in their countries of origin would have an impact on their migration and employment trajectories. However, when conducting my interviews, the shared experiences of the research participants first drew my attention. Many aspects of the story of Carlos – a Spaniard in his late twenties who I talked with in June 2014 – were recurrent in the interviews I conducted.

‘[W]hen I lived in [Spain] they offered me a permanent contract, for life, as a teacher, but I said no, because I want to be a journalist and live in Brussels. And, in fact, the money I saved while working as a teacher in Spain I invested to live here and to do a master [in International Journalism].’

‘... I thought that there was freedom of movement. I thought – and that’s what everyone here thinks – that you can allow yourself all the time you wish to find a job. Well, no, it’s not like that. Because it’s those famous three months, 90 days or you have to leave.’

‘... Luckily in three months I did find the job that I have right now [as school assistant] ... I have a chronic illness and therefore I absolutely needed to have a doctor. And to have one you need to have a job. That’s why the pressure ... was a bit like a question of life and death ... This is why the job I have does not give me anything as a worker, but as a citizen it has given me what I needed the most which was social security and an ID card [registration certificate].’

At the time we did the interview, Carlos had lived in Brussels for two years. He had two master's degrees, the first of which would have guaranteed him a stable job as a teacher in Spain. However, in the interview he described his passion for journalism and explained that his dream was to become a foreign correspondent. To this end, he had taken a considerable risk – a genuine leap of faith: He had left his permanent job in Spain and invested his savings to do a postgraduate master's degree in international journalism in Brussels. While he described the extremely precarious condition defining journalistic work in today's Spain, where young professionals in particular are forced into freelancing for minimal salaries and social protection provisions, he did not quote these conditions as the reason for his decision to migrate. Instead, moving to Brussels was motivated by his conviction that the only way for him to realise himself was through work as a journalist in an international environment.

However, making a living as a freelance correspondent in Brussels turned out to be an unforeseeable struggle. In the interview Carlos recounted his feelings of desperation during his periods of unemployment and underemployment while trying to get by without adequate sources of income. Besides, as the extracts from his interview also show, his struggles in Brussels were not solely due to the difficult labour market. Carlos also recounted how he had entered into an administrative limbo when trying to register his residence, while the local administration imposed on him a strictly temporary right to reside unless he was able to prove employment, which also impeded him from accessing the welfare services in Belgium. Thus, he had realised that his freedom of movement was, in fact, a conditional right. Despite these circumstances, he had stayed and was working as a school assistant, a job he had accepted in order to gain his residence certificate and, in this way, to access the health care services he critically needed.

THE WIDENING GAP BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND REALITIES OF FREE MOBILITY

The harsh reality that Carlos described did not correspond to the expectations he had had before taking the decision to migrate, and his story is indeed in sharp conflict with the image of mobile young professionals promoted by the EU in official discourse. To encourage intra-EU mobility among educated young people is a long-standing objective of the European Commission (EC), which targets young people with its key mobility programmes, including Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs and European Voluntary Service (Nikunen, 2017). In the past decades, these programmes have offered both an institutional framework and financial support for the mobility of millions of Europeans. The EC's official discourse depicts mobility as a means to enhance young people's 'employability', that is,

their ability to attain and retain employment in flexible labour markets (e.g. EC, 2010a; EC, 2016; Nikunen, 2017). While educational credentials alone are considered less and less sufficient to render individuals employable (Leonard et al., 2016), international experience is increasingly viewed as central to employability and a lack of such experience a risk in the global and local competition for jobs (Brown et al., 2004). Hence, particularly for highly educated young Europeans, voluntary geographical mobility has become viewed as an integral component of successful transitions to the labour markets and independent adulthood (Courtois, 2020; Crains et al., 2017).

At the same time, however, young workers across Europe face persistent difficulties in the labour markets, and are disproportionately exposed to unemployment as well as precarious types of work characterised by instability, insecurity, lack of protection, and social or economic vulnerability (Buchholz et al., 2009; Rogers and Rogers, 1989). Although education still generally provides the best protection against precarious employment (Buchholz et al., 2009), evidence shows that this protective effect of higher education is eroding (Samek Lodovici and Semenza, 2012). Especially in southern European countries, where precarious labour conditions among young workers are widespread, a number of studies have identified migration as a strategy for university-educated young adults to escape precarious labour market conditions (Bartolini et al., 2017; Bygnes and Bivand Erdal, 2017; Lafleur and Stanek, 2016a). However, much less is known about what happens to young EU citizens when they migrate to labour markets in other EU Member States. Studies on young EU migrants' labour market outcomes are limited, but some recent research indicates that this group may be disadvantaged in the labour market not only as young persons, but also compared to their national peers (Akgüç and Beblavý, 2019). Consequently, instead of functioning as a stepping-stone, migration may also lead to labour market entrapment for this group (Crains et al., 2017; O'Reilly et al., 2019).

Importantly, as the story of Carlos shows, young EU migrants may not only face a labour market in their destination country offering fewer and different kinds of opportunities than they expected, but also their expectations regarding their rights as EU citizens may be thwarted (see also Favell, 2008: 93-95). The EC in its official discourse and actions has for decades been promoting EU citizenship as a set of rights while seeking to encourage intra-EU mobility. Although EU migrants are known to move with little knowledge of their rights (Ackers and Dwyer, 2002: 41; Favell, 2008: 16-17), the discursive emphasis placed on the freedom of movement and the principle of equal treatment with nationals of the Member State of residence tends to create expectations of rights and equality. Indeed, freedom of movement continues to be a right that citizens themselves closely associate with EU citizenship (Eurobarometer, 2020). Nonetheless, in recent years, several EU Member States have adopted increasingly restrictive policies that reinforce

the conditionality of EU migrants' access to both welfare rights and residence rights and raise barriers to that access (Anderson et al., 2018; Bruzelius, 2019; Pennings and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2018). As a consequence of these policies, EU migrants' rights are increasingly tied to their employment status, a reason for which these restrictions have been assumed to have particularly detrimental effects on EU migrants in precarious work positions (Alberti, 2016; Dwyer et al., 2019; O'Brien, 2016). These policies therefore critically define the context of the present study, and I will discuss their background more in detail in the following sections.

Through this study I seek to understand the reasons for which young, highly qualified and mobile Europeans may choose to stay in their destination country even when the circumstances they face do not correspond to the opportunities and rights they have previously associated with free mobility. Recent research looking at intra-EU migration among young people acknowledges the precarious positions they often occupy in the labour markets of their destination country. However, certain prevalent assumptions in the literature have led to explanations that somewhat disregard the influence of the structural-institutional environment that shapes young EU migrants' relation to the labour market. At times, this relation has been explained by young people's generally changing, more individualised, life-course patterns that accommodate their desire to search for 'adventure' abroad (see King, 2018 for review). For instance, in the study by Engbersen and Snel (2013) on east-west migration of young – often qualified – EU citizens, the readiness of these migrants to 'take up any kind of job, despite their formal qualifications, which supplies them with income upon arrival' is explained by their open plans and lack of obligations, rather than by structural factors defining the labour market or the welfare and migration regimes in the destination country (Engbersen and Snel, 2013; Glorius et al., 2013: 10). Although other studies have contested these arguments with the observations that many young migrants eventually search for economic stability, career progression and upward social mobility (Bygnes and Bivand Erdal, 2017; Lulle et al., 2019), temporary and low-skilled work is nevertheless often seen as a relatively normal step in young migrants' labour market trajectories (see King et al., 2016 for review). The studies often take as their premise that, since EU migrants are predominantly young, they are less dependent on welfare systems and are motivated to participate in the labour market even when their jobs are defined by precariousness and de-skilling (Lulle et al., 2019: 6).

In this study, I avoid assuming such intrinsic motivations. Instead, I argue that understanding the multifaceted reasons behind young university-educated EU migrants' acceptance of precarious employment requires taking into account the social, political, institutional and ideological frameworks in which the labour markets are embedded (Kalleberg and Vallas, 2018; Peck,

1996; Vosko, 2006). While young people may imagine themselves as freely pursuing their own interest when they migrate, they do so within a field of inter-state regulations, institutional arrangements and discourses, and political-economic realities that influences their autonomy (Havering, 2011: 107). In this study I therefore turn to existing theoretical knowledge regarding the functioning of precarious labour markets, as well as literature on precarity in general (e.g. Alberti, 2014; Anderson, 2010; Barbieri, 2009; Kalleberg and Vallas, 2018; Lorey, 2006; Paret and Gleeson, 2016). In this way, I seek to address the political, economic, ideological and discursive transformations that define the context of precarious EU migration, to draw out the connections between these transformations and young migrants' subjective aspirations and experiences and, thus, to advance critical research in this field.

1.2. SITUATING CRITICAL RESEARCH ON MIGRATION WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION

With the aim of situating this study in relation to the research debates in which it partakes, this section reviews earlier research discussions that are relevant for understanding the context of young EU citizens' precarious migrations. This review builds the foundation for clarifying my research objectives and the formulation of my cross-disciplinary analytical approach. I discuss two key transformations, namely, the political-economic and institutional turn towards neoliberalism and its implications for young people's precarity in Europe. I then further describe the evolution of the idea of EU citizens' freedom of movement towards an increasingly 'workfarist' notion.

NEOLIBERAL GOVERNANCE AND PRECARIITY IN EUROPE

This dissertation aims to grasp the research participants' interlinked experiences of work and migration, an overarching aim that is expressed in the complementary, yet different, conceptual approaches used in the three articles that form the empirical foundation of the study. While the articles build on diverse theoretical literature and develop different conceptual tools, there is a common thread running through all three articles. Put concisely, all the articles address, from their distinct perspectives, the influence of neoliberal governance on precarity experienced in the context of the migration of young, highly educated workers in the EU.

Neoliberalism has had pervasive effects on the ways of thought, as well as on structural change in Europe and beyond (Hansen and Hager, 2012). Neoliberalism can be understood as diverse forms of political-economic governance that, while endorsing self-regulating markets, subordinate different spheres of social life to market principles, therefore transforming the social and political order (Harvey, 2007; Larner, 2006: 199; Somers, 2008: 73-82). Larner (2006) argues for the usefulness of interpreting neoliberalism, not merely as a policy doctrine or ideological formation, but through the poststructuralist lens of governmentality, in order to better understand its apparent success. In this view, rather than a straightforward enactment of a unified and coherent philosophy, neoliberalism appears as a political discourse about the nature of rule – a complex and hybrid political imaginary – and a set of practices that facilitate the governing of individuals from a distance (Larner, 2006; Rose, 1999). As governmentality literature makes clear, neoliberal strategies of rule spread to diverse realms, including labour markets, welfare agencies, educational institutions, mobility programmes etc. (e.g. Bamberger et al., 2019; Havering, 2011). Importantly, the influence of neoliberalism is not limited to its implications for political programmes, but it encompasses subjectivity itself through governance strategies that encourage individuals to view their own lives as a type of enterprise and themselves as active subjects responsible for their own well-being (Foucault, 2008; Larner, 2006; McNay, 2009).

In this dissertation my aim is to embrace the complexity and ‘messy actualities’ (Larner, 2006) of neoliberal governance by addressing its implications for individual EU migrants’ lives on various levels, including work, citizenship, mobility and subjectivity. While neoliberalism idealises the principles of free competition and enterprise as prerequisites of human freedom and individual choice, people’s freedom to make choices and give meaning to those choices remains bound by structures and discourses that both enable and limit their autonomy (Rose, 1999). Following Wacquant (2012), I consider the ‘institutional core’ of neoliberalism – state and supra-state actors, from high-standing policy-makers to street-level bureaucrats – to be key agents in steering neoliberal processes, redrawing the boundaries of citizenship, setting the rules and shaping the subjectivities (Wacquant, 2012: 68). Besides, as Dean (2002) and others (e.g. Haikkola, 2019) argue, governance under neoliberalism does not solely happen ‘through freedom’ and individual choice (Rose, 1999), but may also contain authoritarian rationalities that do not necessarily respect individual liberty.

Kalleberg and Vallas (2018) argue that understanding the dynamics of control in neoliberalism is also fundamental for understanding precarisation. Kalleberg (2011) describes how the megatrend of globalisation has intensified competition between companies and between workers, which in turn has contributed to the polarisation of labour markets increasingly into ‘good’ jobs

and 'bad' jobs. For companies, the increased competition has created both incentives and opportunities to outsource the heightened business risks to individual workers, which, on the other hand, has been enabled by the concomitant neoliberal trend of labour market deregulation (Kalleberg, 2011). Kalleberg and Vallas (2018) stress the way in which neoliberalism opposes collective arrangements that might interfere with market forces, including labour regulations and minimum wage standards, and state provisions for income support, therefore generally rendering workers more dependent on employers. Neoliberalism also encourages radically individualised forms of employment and outsourcing aimed at maximising shareholder value through achieving greater flexibility at the cost of the employees (Harvey, 2007; Kalleberg and Vallas, 2018).

Meanwhile, the intensified mobility of work and capital has created competition between national economies and welfare states in terms of providing the most favourable conditions for businesses, therefore encouraging a race to the bottom in terms of both labour market regulation and social safety nets (Blossfeld et al., 2011). The neoliberal policy models are intimately related to cultural shifts that have helped to replace a sense of collective obligation towards the security of all citizens with the notion of individuals' personal responsibility (Kalleberg, 2012; Kelly, 2006; Wacquant, 2012). Therefore, as Somers (2008) argues, market-driven governance has had profound implications for state citizenship: it re-organises the non-contractual relationship between state and its citizens from one of rights and obligations to one that is based on the principles of *quid pro quo* market exchange. According to Somers' analysis from the U.S. context, the public discourses associated with the neoliberal regime of market fundamentalism displace the responsibility for social problems from structural conditions to alleged defects of individuals, resulting in a growing fraction of the population no longer being able to access rights as citizens (Somers, 2008: 2). Somers (2008: 71-73) refers to the obligation for people to participate in paid employment as a condition for 'earning' their rights and protection as the 'contractualisation of citizenship'.

Hansen and Hager (2012: 112-113) show how, starting from the launch of the Lisbon Agenda in 2000, social policy reforms across the EU have been increasingly subordinated to exigencies of neoliberal competitiveness (see also Bothfeld and Betzelt, 2011). Workers' flexibility and adaptability have been seen as the key solutions to the persistent problems of unemployment in European countries (Barbieri, 2009; Hansen and Hager, 2012: 114; Heyes, 2011). According to Hansen and Hager (2012), this has meant a movement away from unconditional social entitlements, accused of passivising citizens, towards policy solutions with a workfarist edge. This has marked a significant cultural shift towards citizens' individualised responsibility in Europe. Workfarism is a profoundly neoliberal construct that stresses citizens'

responsibility in managing the social and economic risks they confront in the labour market by embracing flexibility and actively working on their employability (Bothfeld and Betzelt, 2011). The EU has promoted a 'flexicurity' model, under which it recommends that such social policy measures be accompanied by opportunities for individuals in skill upgrading and 'lifelong learning'. Its Member States have implemented the latter policy objective to differing degrees (Heyes, 2011). All in all, in many European countries the increased emphasis on the conditionality of citizens' social protection entitlements on their participation in paid labour markets has eroded some of the protective functions of the welfare state (O'Reilly et al., 2019). Workfare policies also include the conception of accountability and penalties for non-compliance (Clasen and Clegg, 2007; Greer, 2016; Morris, 2019) and they often target young people, who are expected to show particular flexibility and a willingness to improve their 'employability' or face being sanctioned by a loss of social protection (Paju et al., 2019).

Due to their ability to determine labour regulations and individuals' access to social protection and welfare, states can be seen as key 'manufacturers' of precarity (Alberti et al., 2018: 45). Workfarist reforms, which advance modes of contractualised citizenship, increase the pressure on employees to comply with their employers' demands for flexibility. Conversely, workers in precarious work arrangements are also one of the groups most vulnerable to such reforms (Alberti et al., 2018; Greer, 2016: 167). Furthermore, while states may 'internally' exclude citizens who, by their legal status, would have access to formal citizenship rights (Somers, 2008), an even more apparent exclusion from rights is experienced by people who fall outside the very category of citizen, that is, migrants (and stateless persons) who live in a country with less than full citizenship status (Goldring and Landolt, 2011; Lori, 2017). As Paret and Gleeson (2016: 280) note, the notion of precarity is especially relevant for migrant populations, which experience multiple forms of vulnerability and precariousness vis-à-vis both work and citizenship regimes.

Yet, due to the ambiguous status of intra-EU migrants as 'migrant citizens' with presumably privileged access to formal citizenship rights, the significance of citizenship for their labour market position has relatively rarely been addressed in research (see however Alberti, 2014; Alberti, 2016; Ciupijus, 2011; Lillie and Simola, 2016; Spreckelsen et al., 2019). However, the policies in various EU Member States, which establish restrictive conditionality on EU migrants' welfare and residence rights, resonate with workfarist welfare policies as they render EU migrants' rights increasingly conditional on their ability to demonstrate employment, self-sufficiency or 'genuine employability' (Anderson, 2015). O'Brien (2016: 941) argues that these developments are resulting in genuinely free movement becoming the preserve of privileged migrants in secure, regular, full-time, and permanent

work, who are accorded much greater safety in the free movement framework than those in lower-paid and less secure jobs. Next, I summarise the developments that have led to the once celebrated ‘fundamental right’ to free movement turning into one that is increasingly conditional and selectively endowed.

A WORKFARIST EU FREE MOVEMENT REGIME?

In the 1957 Treaty of Rome, freedom of movement within the newly established European Economic Community was first granted exclusively to workers. Throughout the years the right to free movement and equal treatment with nationals of the destination country have been increasingly detached from economic activity, particularly since the creation of citizenship of the European Union (hereafter EU citizenship) in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. The expansion of rights has happened especially through the rulings of the European Court of Justice (ECJ), which has incrementally extended the entitlements of EU citizens abroad. For a very long time, the ECJ maintained that EU citizenship was ‘destined to become a fundamental status’ of all Member States’ nationals (Kostakopoulou, 2014).

Nevertheless, EU citizens’ freedom of movement and right to equal treatment has never been formally unconditional. Under Directive 2004/38/EC, the right to equal treatment with the nationals of the Member State of residence remains primarily reserved for ‘workers’, ‘self-employed’, ‘self-sufficient persons’, ‘students’ – or ‘family members’ of such (Bruzelius, 2019). According to the European Commission, ‘the term “worker” has a meaning in EU law and cannot be subject to national definitions or be interpreted restrictively’:

‘It covers any person who undertakes genuine and effective work for which he is paid under the direction of someone else ... Short duration of employment, limited working hours or low productivity cannot prevent an EU citizen from being considered an EU migrant worker ... Part-time workers, trainees and au pairs fall within the EU definition if their activity is effective and genuine.’ (European Commission, 2010b.)

Nonetheless, a number of factors have enabled certain EU countries to move towards a more restrictive understanding of EU citizens’ rights without an explicit political decision at the EU level. Most importantly, the definitions of concepts such as ‘worker’, ‘jobseeker’ and ‘inactive person’ continue to remain vague in EU law and significant leeway is left for national interpretations and bureaucratic discretion. Following ECJ case law, EU citizens who move to

another EU country as ‘jobseekers’ should be granted a ‘reasonable period’ to look for employment and most commentators agree that such a period should be ‘no less than six months’ (Valcke, 2020). Furthermore, under Article 7(3) of Directive 2004/38, jobseekers who have previously been employed in the destination country for at least six months should be treated as ‘retained workers’, entitled to equal treatment for at least six months. Afterwards, Member States may require them to provide evidence that they are continuing to seek employment with ‘a genuine chance of being engaged’ – another ambiguous expression open to the Member State’s own estimations on individuals’ ‘employability’. The Directive leaves open the possibility for a Member State to expel an EU citizen who is considered to be putting an ‘unreasonable burden’ on its social assistance system or who no longer satisfies the conditions of the right of residence set out in the Directive.

Although freedom of movement constantly appears in surveys as the most positively viewed outcome of European integration, in many of the countries that receive the largest flows of intra-EU migration it has also become the culprit of very negatively perceived developments such as rising labour market competition and diminishing welfare services (Lillie and Simola, 2016). Paradoxically, EU migrants arriving from poorer Member States are not only accused of stealing jobs and social dumping, but also of ‘welfare tourism’, motivated by the possibilities to abuse welfare systems without contributing anything in return (Lillie and Simola, 2016; O’Reilly et al., 2016).

As a political response to such sentiments, in many of the Union Member States more or less conscious circumvention of EU legislation has taken place throughout the years, while the countries have refused to recognise nationals of other EU countries ‘as co-citizens and holders of a right to equal treatment’ (Jacqueson, 2018; Kostakopoulou, 2014: 430). The years following the 2008 global economic downturn have been a watershed in this development. The rising popularity of populist and xenophobic political parties has brought demands for measures aimed at controlling migration into the political mainstream in various Member States, and a mounting backlash against intra-EU migration has also emerged (Gsir et al., 2016; Lillie and Simola, 2016). The result of the Brexit referendum was the clearest manifestation of the growing popular pressure to re-establish ‘control’ over national borders, labour markets and welfare systems (O’Reilly et al., 2016: 808–812; Sotkasiira and Gawlewicz, 2020). However, already before the British vote to leave the EU, the UK, together with countries such as the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium, actively sought means to restrict EU citizens’ freedom of movement and access to national welfare systems. Importantly, according to many commentators (Alberti, 2016; Dougan, 2016; Dwyer et al., 2019; Jacqueson, 2018; O’Brien, 2016), the ECJ, once considered the prime guarantor of the rights of EU citizens, has shown decreasing resistance to Member States’ restrictive policies.

In practice, several EU countries currently apply restrictive interpretations of the above-mentioned concepts (O'Brien et al., 2015), while administrative discretion on the local level also critically impacts EU migrants' access to residence and social rights (see also Bruzelius et al., 2017; Carmel et al., 2016; Heindlmaier and Blauburger, 2017). The ECJ's most recent rulings have signalled a move closer to a legal framework under which the right to residency and right to equal treatment are more closely interlinked and tied to the migrants' economic and employment status (Bruzelius, 2019; Dougan, 2016; O'Brien, 2016). These legal decisions have been interpreted as a response to increasing anti-EU sentiment across the Union (Lillie and Simola, 2016; Jacqueson, 2018) and they show the ECJ's increasing tolerance towards the EU Member States' attempts to establish a selective, 'workfarist' migration regime within the area of free movement.

1.3. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This section discusses the empirical objectives of the study. The research design is anchored at the micro-level, in the lives of young adults with precarious employment and migration trajectories. These trajectories, however, are analysed in the context of the above-described macro-level transformations that define the environment in which these precarious migrations took place. In the following pages, I first present my cross-disciplinary research approach and then the research questions.

THE MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF PRECARIOUS MIGRATIONS: A CROSS-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH

Academic interest in precarity – and its political relevance – has proliferated in the past few decades (Alberti et al., 2018). The different applications of this concept have sought to capture contemporary conditions and experiences of work and life inflected with increasing insecurity in both objective and subjective respects (e.g. Anderson, 2010; Berlant, 2011; Kalleberg, 2011; Lorey, 2006; Papadopoulos et al., 2008; Tsianos and Papadopoulos, 2006). The widespread and multiple usages of the concept of precarity in contemporary social analysis have also raised questions and discussion regarding its analytical value (e.g. Alberti et al., 2018; Neilson and Rossiter, 2008). In this dissertation, I align with the view of Paret and Gleeson (2016: 280) who argue that such diverse approaches may represent strength rather than weakness, because they expose the multiple dimensions of precarity. They further claim that the ability of the concept of precarity to connect

objective conditions related to political, economic, and social transformations to individuals' subjective experiences and aspirations makes it particularly well suited for a study located in the intersection of migration studies and sociology of work (also Alberti et al., 2018; also Papadopoulos et al., 2008):

'A crucial task is thus to understand how these dimensions are related, whether contradictory, reinforcing, or entirely isolated from each other. This is precisely where the study of precarity intersects with the study of migration.' (Paret and Gleeson, 2016: 280.)

In this study I adopt a cross-disciplinary approach in order to find new conceptual tools to capture different dimensions of precarity as experienced by young EU citizens in the changing context of EU free movement. The complex and multifaceted nature of this context demands an approach that traverses some paradigmatic lines in social science. I combine theoretical insights from the fields of sociology of work, critical migration research, comparative welfare state research and governmentality studies, while also contributing to these fields of research. Arguably, an analysis that situates precarity within broader political-historical transformations and social structures does not only help to understand young migrants' experiences, but can also advance our understanding of precarity itself (Paret and Gleeson, 2016: 277-278).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The cross-disciplinary approach in this dissertation does not only mean that the three separate articles contribute to different fields of research, but that the approach is also built into the research design. The articles draw on theoretical discussions arising from partly different disciplines of social scientific inquiry. Nevertheless, the three articles are interconnected, build largely on the same data focusing on migrants' lived experiences, and share the conceptual framework regarding the multifaceted contours of neoliberal governance in this particular context.

Most importantly, the three articles share an interest in understanding (1) *the reasons for which highly educated young EU migrants accept their precarious working and living conditions, and the implications of this acceptance*. All the articles also examine (2) *the role of state- and EU-level institutions in conditioning young EU migrants' autonomy, independence and room for manoeuvre in precarious labour market conditions, and the possible inequalities emerging in this respect*.

To analyse these questions, the articles develop novel conceptual tools and approaches that address different dimensions of precarity as experienced by the young EU migrants themselves. I have formulated the research questions for each of the articles through a cyclical process in which tentative observations from the data directed me to engage with existing literature addressing related theoretical problems arising from different fields of study. This led me towards more specific empirical research questions. The theoretical problem and the empirical research questions addressed in each of the articles are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Theoretical problems and empirical research questions*

	Article I	Article II	Article III
Theoretical problem derived from previous literature	The global spread of precarious citizenship and practices of boundary enforcement. Implications for young EU migrants in precarious work positions?	The impact of the variation in European welfare models on young EU migrants' access to financial independence.	Neoliberal subject formations as an instrument for governing young EU migrants' lives in conditions of precarious labour markets.
Empirical research questions	How do the increasing precarisation of employment relations, the changing social and legal norms regulating EU migration and the local implementation of these norms intersect on the level of young EU migrants' lives, and with what implications?	How does young EU migrants' access to income support in their country of origin and their country of destination shape their access to financial independence in conditions of precarious work?	How are neoliberal subjectivities constituted and lived out by young highly educated workers in the context of EU migration, and with what implications?

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SUMMARY ARTICLE

The structure of the present summary article is as follows: In Chapter 2, I review existing literature outlining the key conceptual and theoretical

approaches applied and developed in the study. In Chapter 3, I discuss the research design, the data and the methods. The aim of Chapter 4 is to offer a synthesis of the results from the three articles forming the empirical basis of the dissertation. Finally, in Chapter 5 I draw broader conclusions from the overall research.

2. CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES FOR STUDYING YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRECARIOUS MIGRATIONS

In this chapter I present the principal conceptual and theoretical approaches applied and developed in the three articles of the dissertation. As noted in the previous chapter, the articles contribute to partly different fields of study, including sociology of work and critical migration research (Article I), comparative welfare state research (Article II) and governmentality studies (Article III). In this chapter I aim at a synthesis of these approaches, and the chapter is therefore not structured following the disciplinary lines. Instead, the objective is to show how these different disciplines have defined and advanced the theoretical understanding of the key concepts in this study.

2.1. PRECARIOUS WORK AND DIFFERENT PATHS OF LABOUR MARKET DEREGULATION IN EUROPE

In previous literature, precarious work arrangements – such as involuntary part-time and fixed-term contracts, on-call, casual and zero-hours contracts, temporary agency work, involuntary and dependent/false self-employment, internship contracts etc. – have been defined as jobs that are characterised by insecurity, temporariness, low pay, insufficient and variable hours, lack of control over work process and conditions of work, limited access to social and labour protection and, in some contexts, informality (Kalleberg and Vallas, 2018; Rodgers, 1989; Rubery et al., 2018). The overall importance of non-standard forms of employment has increased over the past few decades across the world (ILO, 2016). While not all non-standard employment is precarious work, according to the International Labour Office (ILO) (2016: 18), the principal feature defining the latter is its involuntary nature and the condition that the worker, rather than the entity that is hiring her/him, bear the risk associated with the job. Studies addressing the incidence of precarious work arrangements in different contexts generally support the view that market-driven globalisation has contributed to an increase in overall job insecurity in industrialised countries, and that this insecurity goes hand in hand with reductions in the social and statutory protections associated with employment relations (ILO, 2016; Kalleberg, 2011; Kalleberg and Vallas, 2018).

Virtually all European states deregulated their labour markets in 1980s and 1990s (Barbieri, 2009). Barbieri (2009) interprets the deregulation trend as a

response to the financial pressures and the intellectual arguments portraying institutional guarantees, such as employment protection legislation and welfare, as the principal culprits of the persistently high levels of unemployment. There is, however, important variation in the way in which deregulation has been targeted in the different European states. The Nordic countries followed a 'universalistic' deregulation path (Barbieri, 2009: 623), Denmark standing out with a relatively low level of employment protection for all workers, compensated, however, by measures aiming at protecting income security (Jørgensen and Klindt, 2018). Compared to Denmark, Finland has maintained stricter employment protection rules for regular employees, but its labour market is regulated primarily through collective bargaining, with very high coverage, and the agreements apply to temporary employment contracts too (Madsen et al., 2013: 332-334; Saloniemä and Zeytinoglu, 2007). By contrast, the 'continental-corporatist' Europe (in which category Barbieri counts countries such as Spain, Italy, France, Belgium and Germany) focused on deregulating non-standard employment relations at the margins of the labour market, which led to the creation of two-tier labour markets where the existing 'standard' work contracts for the core (male, unionised) workforce were largely left intact (Barbieri, 2009: 621-624). The deregulation-at-the-margins approach has been apt to reinforce labour market segmentation according to social-structural attributes such as gender, class, immigration status and age (Barbieri, 2009; O'Reilly et al., 2015; Schierup et al., 2006), and while it may have limited the incidence of long-term unemployment amongst certain groups, such as first-time jobseekers, it has also made their labour market integration more unstable and insecure (Madsen et al., 2013).

Research shows that migrants make up a disproportionate part of the precarious labour force in Europe and are generally highly exposed to informal labour, wage squeezes, as well as temporariness and uncertainty at work (ILO, 2016, 144-151; Schierup et al., 2015). Additionally, the workers' nationality, ethnicity and legal status intersect with other attributes creating labour market disadvantage (Kalleberg, 2011; Vosko, 2006) (see Section 2.5.). The incidence of precarious work also correlates strongly with gender, which is shown to be due to long-standing discriminatory patterns in the labour markets, the unequal distribution of unpaid work within families, as well as public policies (such as child and elderly care policies) that can either support or hinder women's full and equal participation in the labour markets, among other things (ILO, 2016: 119-120). Especially young female workers may be heavily penalised for their – real or potential – career interruptions due to childbearing and rearing (McKay et al., 2012).

In addition, the age of workers is a central attribute of precarious employment. Statistics show that in most European countries people aged 15–29 years are more likely than older adults to be working on temporary contracts with limited job security, although there is significant variation

within Europe in terms of both the incidence and the voluntary nature of non-standard employment among this group (Madsen et al., 2013; O'Reilly et al., 2015). Other studies also demonstrate that the problems young workers face do not end once they have entered the labour market and found a job, but that workers frequently alternate between temporary employment, unemployment and periods of inactivity until their mid-thirties (Chung et al., 2012). Importantly, although education still appears as the best guarantee for eventually accessing stable jobs (Barbieri, 2009; ILO, 2016), the previously strong link between education and good-quality employment has become less straightforward, and young university graduates increasingly struggle to find secure employment in their professional fields (Chung et al., 2012; also Murgia and Poggio, 2014; Samek Lodovici and Semenza, 2012). The latest economic crisis further deteriorated the employment prospects of young people in Europe, increasing both the incidence of unemployment and non-standard employment among younger age cohorts. In certain countries, like Spain, the crisis actually curbed the long rising trend in temporary employment among younger workers, but only because temporary employees were the first ones to lose their jobs (ILO, 2016: 55-56; Madsen et al., 2013). On the other hand, in the Nordic countries with more universalistic policies, non-standard employment has remained less common among young workers and it is more often voluntary compared to Southern Europe (Madsen et al., 2013).

2.2. WORKFARIST SOCIAL POLICY REFORMS AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF LABOUR

Previous research further highlights the role that welfare policies and institutions play in channelling employment flexibilities, risks and insecurity towards specific societal groups, and thus in shaping the social consequences of the processes of deregulation (Barbieri, 2009; 622-623; Blossfeld et al., 2008). Rubery et al. (2018) aptly define precarious work through negation, as the absence of those aspects of employment relationships that reduce employers' power over workers by supporting the de-commodification of labour, that is, an individual's ability to enjoy an acceptable standard of living independently of market participation (Esping-Andersen, 1991). Precarious work relations are thus intrinsically characterised by the lack of substantive protections against unfiltered market exposure that employers and welfare states provide to workers in full-time permanent work in advanced economies. These protections include, but are not limited to, guarantees of sufficient income during work and non-work periods that reduce pressures to sell labour under disadvantaged conditions. (Rubery et al., 2018: 510.) Wacquant (2012: 72) characterises commodification as part of the

institutional logic behind the reengineering of the role of states as core agents steering the neoliberal processes.

Along with the pressures of labour market flexibilisation, rising global competition and the triumph of neoliberal thought have also encouraged states to carry out reforms in their welfare systems (Kalleberg, 2011). In Europe, since the launch of the EU's Lisbon Agenda in 2000, there has been a general shift towards a paradigm that emphasises labour 'activation' – although the concrete policies EU countries have adopted vary greatly in terms of content, governance and period of introduction (Bothfeld and Betzelt, 2011; Hansen and Hager, 2012). If earlier labour market policies had de-commodified labour through generous benefits protecting the unemployed and making them more reluctant to accept jobs with low pay or low quality, the 'active' labour market policies (ALMPs) were designed to do the opposite (Rueda, 2015). ALMPs combine labour market flexibility with the management and increasing conditionality of welfare benefits, thus explicitly seeking to increase the number of available jobseekers, encourage wage moderation and increase labour flexibility (Greer, 2016: 166; Madsen et al., 2013: 332). According to Bothfeld and Betzelt (2011), the activation agenda introduced into social policy the neoclassical idea of self-entrepreneurial 'economic citizen', while structural unemployment became increasingly perceived as a problem of the individual, and excessive state intervention was considered to distort the market mechanism by passivising the unemployed (also Rueda, 2015). From a gender perspective, activation strategies represent a radical shift in women's social citizenship as they challenge the traditional, gendered division of labour while promoting a worker-citizen norm for all adults (Letablier et al., 2011: 79). Thus, as Lerner (2006: 206) notes, such social policy reforms specify a completely new object of governance that perceives all political subjects, not only firms or male breadwinners, as entrepreneurial.

Barbier (2004) identifies two ideal types of labour activation approaches: the universalistic type with an emphasis on 'social investment' and the liberal type with tendencies toward a 'workfare' (or 'work-first') orientation (Barbier and Ludwig-Mayerhofer, 2004). The 'social investment' type is said to be best exemplified by Denmark and the Netherlands, whose 'flexicurity' models combine lower employment protection with generous unemployment benefits and training opportunities, thus emphasising market dynamism, income security and 'human capital' development (Heyes, 2011; Jørgenden and Kleidt, 2018). The notion of flexicurity framed the European Commission's labour market policy throughout the 2000s and in 2007 it was officially made a part of the European Employment Strategy encouraging EU Member States to develop their policies in accordance with this agenda (Heyes, 2011: 643-644).

In practice, however, the EC's ability to impose its recommendations regarding flexicurity on Member States through the open method of coordination has been relatively weak and dependent on the voluntary efforts of national governments (Heyes, 2011). Hence, instead of flexicurity, there has been a growing tendency for European governments to favour employment policies of a workfarist nature, effective in reducing unemployment in the short term as they urge people to accept any jobs available (Heyes, 2011). Indeed, as Greer (2016: 164) argues, ALMPs tend to have workfare-type leanings even in countries known for social models that are not explicitly workfarist (see e.g. Kananen, 2012 and Haikkola, 2019 for the Finnish experience). By increasing the conditionality of social benefits and adding new forms of administrative control over workers and jobseekers and penalties for non-compliance with the regime, workfare-type reforms often lead to institutional changes intended to make workers more compliant in low-wage and/or flexible jobs (Evers and Guillemard, 2012; Greer, 2016; Morris, 2019; Theodore and Peck, 2001). Policies with a workfarist orientation are also prone to escalate the discipline of the market, especially over precarious workers who are generally more exposed to such schemes (Greer, 2016). Meanwhile, giving priority to paid work as primary access to social participation renders alternative social behaviours, such as long job search or requalification periods to find a better match, increasingly illegitimate, which may in reality play against the objectives of social investment (Bothfeld and Betzelt, 2011). Accordingly, Rubery at al. (2018) argue that activation measures tend to normalise precarious work by repositioning it as an acceptable alternative to 'standard' employment. For instance, in Belgium, the originally generous and inclusive unemployment benefit system was reformed throughout the 1990s and 2000s following a workfarist activation agenda, heightening the conditionality, behavioural requirements and penalties related to unemployment benefits (De Greef, 2018: 7-9). As a consequence, large numbers of people no longer eligible for unemployment insurance were directed to social integration measures¹ through the social (assistance) centres (CPAS), which, in turn, also follow the principles of activation and aim at inserting citizens back into the labour market as quickly as possible (De Greef, 2018: 8-9)¹.

Indeed, as Heyes (2011: 645) notes, while there has been some convergence in employment and social protection policy in Europe, rather than a general

¹ For EU migrants these social integration measures have also become a trap, as in recent years Belgium has interpreted participation in the programme as dependence on welfare benefits, and EU migrants taking part in the scheme have been expelled based on constituting an 'unreasonable burden' (Lafleur and Mescoli, 2018).

adoption of the relatively generous unemployment benefits provided by Denmark in the 1990s, the benefits system in Denmark has increasingly started to resemble those of other EU countries. Despite the obvious success of the flexicurity model in ending the country's decades-long unemployment crisis, Jørgensen and Klindt (2018) stress that the model was not uncontested even in Denmark. In the early 2000s, a number of changes following a workfare approach were introduced, including an increased emphasis on work-oriented activation, control of the unemployed and penalties for non-compliance with job search requirements, reduced vocational training opportunities and restrictions on the duration of unemployment benefits (Jørgensen and Klindt, 2018). While the Finnish activation strategies, as well, are normally classified under the social investment type (although its investment in ALMPs is lower than in Denmark), the reforms carried out in its unemployment insurance system since the 1990s have introduced similar workfare elements (Kananen, 2012; Haikkola, 2019; Rueda, 2015: 303). However, in neither of these countries have these adjustments represented a radical break from the social investment agenda and the systems in both countries continue to guarantee a basic income for all citizens (Breidahl, 2011; Haikkola, 2019).

In comparison, the southern European countries stand on the other side of the spectrum in terms of social investment, while workers in disadvantaged positions are also much more exposed to labour market flexibility and less protected by the compensating social security measures (Madsen et al., 2013). As Madsen et al. (2013) point out, it was not until the launch of the European Employment Strategy that the flexicurity agenda gained some currency in southern Europe. In practice the idea was largely disregarded, and the social programmes continue to have a mostly passive orientation (Barbier and Fargion, 2004). More fundamentally, employment status has always been constitutive to the social protection systems in this part of Europe, which has left large portions of the population excluded (Barbier and Fargion, 2004; Bothfeld and Betzelt, 2011). In this respect, the stringent work-related conditionality and tendency towards labour commodification could be argued to make the southern welfare systems 'workfarist' by default. Meanwhile, as Barbier and Fargion (2004: 441) point out regarding Italy: '[s]tructurally [...] the potential scope for activation in this area is limited and Italy could hardly develop a coherent "activation" policy aimed at moving citizens from "welfare dependency" to work'. In 2012, in the heyday of the economic austerity following the latest economic crisis, both Italy and Spain adopted significant labour market policy reforms, although with different approaches, Spain focusing on further deregulation, while Italy combined flexibilisation with somewhat increased coverage of some protective institutions, especially unemployment benefits (Picot and Tassinari, 2017). The systems in both countries, however, remained largely conditional on work contributions and without comprehensive minimum income schemes (Eurofund, 2015).

2.3. YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO SOCIAL ENTITLEMENTS AND FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE UNDER PRECARIOUS WORK AND CONDITIONAL WELFARE

While European welfare models all include diverse 'workfarist' elements, they continue to differ considerably regarding the availability and conditionality of social entitlements meant to support young people's transitions from education to gainful employment (Chevalier, 2016; Knijn, 2012; Madsen et al., 2013). Importantly, Chevalier (2016: 5-6) argues that the quality of young people's social rights, or lack thereof, should not only be evaluated based on the de-commodification effect, but also in terms of their ability to mitigate or exacerbate their dependency on support from their families, i.e. their de-familialisation effect. This concept was originally developed to refer to the degree to which women were able to provide for themselves regardless of their family status, and it has subsequently been applied to young people's social rights (Arundel and Lennartz, 2017; Saraceno, 2016: 317). The two principal ways in which young Europeans can achieve financial independence are by entering paid employment and by accessing social entitlements (Chevalier, 2016: 5). In practice these two are intertwined: an adequate social security coverage not only renders young people more financially independent of their parents, but is also shown to lead to better labour market outcomes in terms of both earnings and job stability (Leschke and Finn, 2019: 132-133). The fact that, today, young people's prospects of achieving stable employment and financial independence are increasingly hampered into their early thirties is in large part due to their exposure to precarious work (Bradley and Devadason, 2002; Murgia and Poggio, 2014; O'Reilly et al., 2015). Such a situation often leads to more generalised precariousness in terms of living conditions and the ability to develop long-term plans, as well as in terms of laying down some practical markers in their transition to adulthood such as housing independence and starting a family (Murgia and Poggio, 2014; O'Reilly et al., 2015).

To address the challenges that the above-described intricacies of welfare reforms pose for comparative analyses, Clasen and Clegg (2007: 171) distinguish between three types of *conditions* that have come to operate within contemporary welfare states: conditions related to *category*, *circumstance* and *conduct*. They argue that paying close attention to different levels and levers of conditionality can help to capture changes in the relationship between rights and obligations and 'thus provides an empirical basis for gauging the reality of "transformations" in social citizenship' and management of social risks (Clasen and Clegg, 2007: 172). In this section, I focus particularly on the implications the different types of conditionality may

have on young people's access to social entitlements and financial independence in conditions of precarious work.

The primary condition for the receipt of social security is always membership of a defined *category* of support. Citizenship and residence are the most prominent examples of categorical conditionality, with implications for migrant populations, but there are also criteria related to age. The minimum age required for young people to become independently entitled to social benefits differs between welfare states (Knijn, 2012; Leschke and Finn, 2019). At the same time, as discussed above, the welfare models in Europe vary in how loosely or tightly an individual's eligibility to social entitlement is conditional on contributions made in paid employment or, alternatively, on their degree of financial need (*circumstance*) (Clasen and Clegg, 2007: 173). Therefore, in some policy designs, like those to be found in southern Europe, young people's exposure to unemployment and precarious work, resulting in a lack of continuous work experience, may fail to provide them access to entitlements due to their insufficient contributions (Leschke and Finn, 2019; Madsen et al., 2013). Also the definition of 'need' varies between countries according to perceptions of family obligations to support (Chevalier, 2016). In southern European welfare states, the parents' responsibility for adult children is not only a matter of legal obligation, but it is also created through the absence of alternatives (Saraceno, 2016: 317–320). Within this region, protracted dependence on parents has become the most common manner of coping with the risks that young adults face in the labour market, whereas in the Nordic countries welfare state institutions are expected to buffer people against such risks (Arundel and Lennartz, 2017). (For a more detailed description of the welfare conditionality at play in the five EU countries involved in this study, see Article II).

Finally, following the 'activation' agenda, most EU countries have placed increasing emphasis on behavioural requirements (*conduct*), imposing constraints upon different types of benefit recipients through legislation or administrative guidance (Clasen and Clegg, 2007: 174). Such requirements often target young people under a certain age limit (Haikkola, 2019; Knijn, 2012; Paju et al., 2019). The EC has particularly promoted lifelong learning strategies as part of its flexicurity agenda, encouraging EU Member States to offer training and apprenticeship opportunities etc., to ensure the continual adaptability and employability of workers. Paju et al. (2019) demonstrate how young jobseekers are trained to regard themselves as enterprises through the implementation of such measures aiming at 'human capitalisation' (also Kelly, 2006). At the same time, Haikkola (2019) argues that, while 'activation' policies are often associated with neoliberal forms of governance that seek to produce self-governing and self-responsible subjectivities, the practical implementation of these policies, which happens through street-level bureaucratic actors endowed with discretionary power, includes authoritarian

measures that represent the paternalistic side of neoliberal governance (Dean, 2002; Wacquant, 2012). She shows how young people's time and behaviour are governed with a particularly short-term focus by exerting control over their plans, use of time and actions in ways that are in accordance with the goals set by the institution (e.g. requirement to participate in government-sponsored training courses and applying for sufficient numbers of jobs), rather than the individual's own goals and motivations (Haikkola, 2019). In many systems, including in Belgium, a refusal to participate in such measures may be penalised by cuts in social benefits (De Greef, 2018).

2.4. EMPLOYABILITY AND THE IMPERATIVE OF SELF-DEVELOPING SUBJECTIVITY

The concept of 'employability' is central to active labour market policies. It has informed policies since the 1980s, not only in relation to work and welfare (Leonardi and Chertkovskaya, 2017) but also, more recently, to internationalisation and transnational mobility (Bamberger et al., 2019; Nikunen, 2017; Yoon, 2014). The concept of employability refers to an individual's ability to attain employment and transit between jobs, implying a shared understanding of an individual's need to cultivate her or his own human capital and, in this way, to be or become an autonomous, self-responsible, self-improving agent in flexible labour markets (Paju et al., 2019). Although the rapid expansion of tertiary education has generally increased the importance of qualifications certificates for early labour market transitions (Blossfeld et al., 2008), a persisting mismatch between demand for and supply of qualified labour has led to a new situation in which having higher education qualifications no longer guarantees a secure career pathway (Murgia and Poggio, 2014). While educational credentials alone are no longer considered sufficient to render individuals employable, the role of generic and transferable skills such as language skills, intercultural competencies and independence is accentuated (Leonard et al., 2016). International experiences are therefore viewed as increasingly central in constituting employability, and a lack of thereof as a risk in the global and local competition for jobs (Courtois, 2020; Yoon, 2014). Nikunen (2017) shows how, in Europe, national and EU-level policies are predicated on the belief that intra-EU mobility will enhance young people's employability; however, this ideal is promoted primarily among highly qualified middle-class youth. Meanwhile, Bamberger et al. (2019) point out how turning internationalisation into a meritocratic global race in the name of neoliberal competitiveness downplays complex inequalities embedded in the structures and systems conditioning it.

In critical social research the concept of employability has been associated with the hegemonic neoliberal imperative that every individual should be or become, in Foucault's (2008) terms, an enterprising subject, continuously working to improve the self as means of achieving a life defined by 'fulfillment, excellence and achievement' (Leonardi and Chertkovskaya, 2017; Paju et al., 2019; Rose, 1998: 154). Bradley and Devadason (2008) show how the associated rhetoric of adaptability and the requirement for lifelong learning are internalised by young people exposed to labour market insecurity (Kelly, 2006). The discourse of employability has been depicted as instrumental in justifying unpaid labour (Leonardi and Chertkovskaya, 2017: 112), while young graduates struggling to find a footing in the world of work are encouraged to acquire experience and skills through accepting internships and 'voluntary contributor' positions (Leonardi and Chertkovskaya, 2017). Such unpaid or low-paid roles have become common entry-level routes for graduates, especially in sectors that are more competitive or deemed attractive (e.g. the third sector, architecture, law, media and creative industries). Critically, young people themselves often perceive internships as almost inevitable, and certain sectors also rely heavily on unpaid graduate labour. (Leonard et al., 2016.) Also the EU's mobility initiatives primarily centre on unpaid labour options such as internships and volunteering, although in many contexts especially repetitive internships have been found to perpetuate young people's job insecurity instead of being a stepping-stone into real employment (ILO, 2016: 135-136).

2.5. MIGRANT WORKERS' EXPOSURE TO PRECARIOUS WORK AND PRECARIOUS CITIZENSHIP

The applicability of previous literature addressing the position of migrant labour in the context of intra-EU migration is not self-evident. EU migrant citizens arguably possess formal rights and complex sets of social characteristics (e.g. migration status, nationality, skin colour) that put them in a privileged position when compared with many other migrant and minority groups (Ciupijus, 2011; McDowell et al., 2009). In this section I discuss the extent to which different concepts and insights from the literature examining migrants' position in the labour markets can help us to understand the experiences of precarious young EU migrants.

Starting from Piore's (1979) seminal work, migrant workers have been recognised to occupy a particular role in the labour market. Researchers building on his work have advanced sophisticated models recognising complex sets of processes that produce labour market segmentations and a

migrant division of labour (Anderson, 2010; McCollum and Findlay, 2015; Sassen, 1991; Wills et al., 2009). Peck (1996) for instance shows how migrants are oriented towards specific functions in the labour market due to complexly interacting recruitment and employment regimes, modes of state regulation and the social practices of the migrants themselves.

Prior research has identified a number of factors that can explain why cross-border mobility may increase young EU migrants' vulnerability to precarious employment. Among newly arrived migrants especially, language barriers, non-recognition of qualifications and limited knowledge of the labour market and employment rights in the receiving country can be significant (MacKenzie and Forde, 2009; Piore, 1979). Besides, the possibility of ethnic prejudice and discrimination cannot be ignored even in the intra-EU migration context, and hierarchies of inequality may appear within the diverse group of EU migrants (see McDowell et al., 2009; Spreckelsen et al., 2019). Furthermore, migrants are often expected to be generally more willing than native workers to accept work under poor conditions because of their dual frames of reference, that is, that the conditions available in the host country appear favourable when compared with the conditions prevalent in their home country (Piore, 1979). This notion has been influential, particularly when explaining the relatively disadvantaged position that migrants from eastern European Member States occupy in western European labour markets (e.g. Engbersen and Snel, 2013; McCollum and Findlay, 2015).

McCollum and Findlay (2015: 436), however, point out that it is important not to fetishise particular migrant groups as being inherently flexible and I argue that the same can be said about young people (cf. e.g. Engbersen and Snel, 2013). Alberti (2014) further highlights the importance of recognising migrants' relative autonomy in precarious labour markets, instead of viewing them as simple victims of precarious employment or complicit with a regime of precarious work and low pay. As she shows in her study on migrant workers in London's hospitality sector, at least some migrants may be able to strategise around their mobility and temporariness to escape degrading jobs, for example by using their temp jobs to gain new skills and reproduce mobility both occupationally and transnationally. The power to use mobility in order to leave bad jobs, however, appears to be contingent on the extent to which migrants are constrained by their migration and employment status. In Alberti's (2014) study, being an EU or a non-EU migrant crucially conditioned the possibility for workers of making use of mobility to quit precarious jobs, as EU migrants were free to stay in the UK without a work permit even if they became unemployed (Alberti, 2014: 10-13).

Indeed, critical migration research (e.g. Anderson, 2010; De Genova and Peutz, 2010; Goldring and Landolt, 2011; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Papadopoulos et al., 2008) has clearly demonstrated the key role states play,

with their immigration control and enforcement policies, in producing temporariness, insecurity, conditionality and 'illegality' of migrants' status and consequently in shaping their conditions in labour markets. Anderson (2010) argues that immigration controls function as a mould that helps to produce types of labour with particular relations to employers and to the labour market. One of the central ways in which immigration controls encourage informal and precarious labour practices is through the production of migrant 'illegality' and deportability, i.e. the threat of forced removal from the territory of the country of residence (De Genova and Peutz, 2010). Where immigration status and conditions of stay are made contingent on migrants' employment status, workers may feel dependent on their employers and unable to challenge their demands. In this way, immigration status functions as an instrument for controlling the migrant labour force, and this dimension of control may also impact the decisions of some employers to recruit migrants due to their expected greater compliance. Therefore, restrictive immigration regimes are also apt to encourage precarious practices in the labour market. (Anderson, 2010; Anderson and Ruhs, 2010.)

Noora Lori (2017; 2019) develops the concept of precarious citizenship to refer to the structured uncertainty of being unable to secure access to formal citizenship rights. With her starting point in Middle East studies, Lori analyses how an increase in efforts by states to build identity management infrastructures has created a margin for people who lack access to permanent and secure citizenship rights. In particular, she shows how the management and denial of identity documents can have significant impacts on livelihood outcomes as these are required to access employment, education, healthcare and other public services and rights. Goldring and Landolt (2011; Landolt and Goldring, 2016) further show how migrants' multi-directional movement across a range of legal status categories is often contingent on their trajectories in the world of work. They highlight how both institutional actors and migrants themselves enact conditionality in these processes. While institutions may confer upon or deny migrants the substantive right to be present in the country and/or to access social entitlements, migrants themselves exercise agency, for example, in working to meet the conditionality and in choosing to make claims (or choosing not to make claims) to rights and entitlements (Landolt and Goldring, 2016).

EU citizens' movement within the free movement zone is almost routinely understood as 'legally almost unconstrained' in studies on EU migration (e.g. Bygnes and Bivand Erdal, 2017; Engbersen and Snel, 2013) and, in principle, EU migrants neither require work-permits nor are they subject to immigration controls. However, the EU Member States' recent efforts to redefine EU migrants' status and establish selective systems based on their ability to 'contribute' show how the boundaries of EU citizenship and conditions defining this status are socially and politically constructed and

subject to change (see Anderson, 2019; Clasen and Clegg, 2007: 172; see also Sotkasiira and Gawlewicz, 2020). In order to understand the increasing unsettledness and ambiguity of the legal status of some EU migrants, I propose that it is helpful to consider the above-discussed insights from the preceding critical migration scholarship. This also means adopting an approach that Anderson (2019: 5-7) terms ‘methodological de-nationalism’ to scrutinise the complex, multi-level governance of state-imposed categories of migrant and citizen and their implications for individual lives (Anderson, 2019: 7).

2.6. NEOLIBERAL SUBJECTIVITY, AUTONOMY AND PASSION

In this final section, I review literature useful for addressing young people’s mobility from the perspective of neoliberal governance of subjectivity. I claim that this perspective can be an important piece in the puzzle when we seek to understand young EU citizens’ precarious migrations. Research applying Foucault’s (2008) concept of governmentality demonstrates how, under neoliberal ideological influence, governmental power is not merely exercised through its direct imposition on the population but, above all, through the articulation of institutional arrangements and discourses that are premised on a form of autonomous, self-responsible and self-developing subjectivity (McNay, 2009; Nordberg, 2020; Rose, 1998; Scharf, 2016; Vallas and Christin, 2018).

An extensive literature has investigated the ways in which individual subjectivities are constituted and reconstituted under neoliberalism, demonstrating how the neoliberal self is an entrepreneurial subject (Foucault, 2008; Kelly, 2006; Paju et al., 2019; Rose, 1999; Scharff, 2016). According to Rose (1998), the image of enterprising self resonates with our contemporary ideas as to what people should be:

‘The self is to be a subjective being, it is to aspire to autonomy, it is to strive for personal fulfilment in its earthly life, it is to interpret its reality and destiny as a matter of individual responsibility, it is to find meaning in existence by shaping its life through acts of choice’ (Rose, 1998:151).

Instead of thinking of power in terms of constraints that dominate, deny or repress such subjectivities, Rose refers to the Foucauldian notion of power as something that traverses all practices through which individuals are led by others to direct or regulate their own actions (Foucault, 2008; Rose, 1998).

The investigation of the relationship between the self and power should therefore focus on the ways in which subjectivity is made 'the central object of, target, and resource for strategies, tactics and processes of regulation'. According to Rose, neoliberalism, as a governance mentality, steers the ideas of how authorities should use their powers and the nature of the persons upon whom they should act. While the autonomisation of the self is itself a central feature of contemporary governmentality, the autonomy of the self is not the antithesis of political power. Instead, as Rose states, governing in a liberal-democratic way means governing through the freedom and aspirations of subjects, rather than in spite of them. (Rose, 1998: 152-155; Rose, 1999.)

There are some empirical adaptations of Foucault's work from other (non-EU) contexts of transnational youth migration that explore how young people's contemporary desire to 'become international' is both constituted and being triggered by the hegemonic discourse of self-developing subjectivity (Havering, 2011; Yoon, 2014). These studies demonstrate how young people not merely conceive their transnational mobility as a means to gain advantage in competitive labour markets to achieve social mobility. Rather, young migrants often view their mobility as part of a project of recreating themselves as subjects imagined as freely and individually pursuing their chosen life course, while seeking their 'true selves' (Havering, 2011; Yoon, 2014). Nikunen (2017: 662) shows how neoliberalism defines the political environment that forms the context of expectations surrounding young people and youth policies in the EU. While the discourses used in government talk are seemingly neutral, promising equality and fulfilment for all, Nikunen traces possibilities of inequality built into these discourses. Thus, certain future visions offered to young people can be unrealistically optimistic for some (see also Berlant, 2011; Nikunen, 2017: 664). In this way, the optimistic promise of fulfilment can actually become an obstacle, especially in an environment in which the guarantees of reaching the aspired work and life are becoming increasingly insecure (Berlant, 2011).

At a more general level, Weeks (2011) describes how contemporary workers are encouraged to view their labour as a process of self-realisation and condition for experiences of meaningful subjectivity (also Rose, 1998: 160). Farrugia (2019) further claims that there are markedly classed differences in the way in which self-realisation through work is defined and experienced: for persons from working-class backgrounds a successful realisation of skills and competencies is more likely to mean recognisable achievements, success and upward social mobility. 'Subjects of passion', instead, are distinctly middle-class and tend to understand the working self in terms of passionate investments that are expected to lead to personal development and personal growth without reference to specific material outcomes (Farrugia, 2019: 1087). Such a passionate attachment to work is imagined as unique to every

individual and expressed not only in relation to labour, but across the person's life as a whole (see also Lorey, 2006).

Lorey (2006) argues that subjects are made easily exploitable precisely because of the belief that precarious living and working conditions are the prerequisites of their freedom, self-improvement and self-realisation. Relatedly, Vallas and Christin (2018) call for more analysis on the ways in which neoliberal policies foster a form of worker subjectivity that aligns with the needs of the precarious economy. In the current economic environment, young middle-class workers searching for self-fulfilling jobs may also confront employment instability, lack of protection and lack of opportunities to make use of the skills they have acquired in their chosen career (Murgia and Poggio, 2014). Murgia and Poggio (2014: 76) thus suggest that, under precarious labour market conditions, passion for work can become a source of self-exploitation, or 'self-precarisation', which Lorey (2006) claims to have become the normal way of working and living in neoliberal societies. In particular, the identification of the self with one's working activities can incite workers to accept even unbearable working and contractual conditions. At the same time, as Armano et al. (2017) note, the boundary between life and work becomes profoundly blurred on the level of a person's identity. Meanwhile, the distinction between lifetime and work time is also broken down, as is the previously clearer line between paid and unpaid labour (Armano et al., 2017: 52-53; see also Papadopoulos et al., 2008: 222-235).

3. DATA AND METHODS

In this chapter I will present and discuss the research design and the methodological choices made in sampling, collecting and analysing the data. The chapter also addresses limitations caused by these choices, as well as ethical considerations in the research.

3.1. THE DATA

The three articles of the dissertation build on data collected from one-time narrative interviews in 2014-2015. Additionally, Article III also draws on answers to written questions to which the same participants were asked to respond in 2018. The empirical sample consists of 27 university-educated young adults originating from Italy (10), Spain (eight), Finland (seven) and Denmark (two). The call for interviews defined the target group through the following questions:

‘Did you move to Brussels to work but realised that finding a job was difficult? Have you done internships or temporary jobs that have not led to more permanent contracts? Have you been unemployed while living in Brussels?’

The call was distributed in three languages (English, Spanish and Finnish) and the most important channels to recruit research participants were various Facebook groups formed around different nationalities living in Belgium/Brussels, together with projects and associations working to help their national group living in Belgium, as well as my own personal networks. The rest of the participants were ‘snowballed’ through the other participants’ networks. In most cases, the participants contacted me, expressing their interest in participating in the study. I recruited one of the participants in person from a meeting directed to young Spanish migrants in Brussels.

As specified in the call, all the participants had moved to Brussels with the intention to work. Yet work was not expected to be their only motivation for coming to Belgium. The data includes persons who had migrated to follow their partners, excluding the so-called ‘accompanying family members’ who move without the intention to find employment of their own. Two-thirds of the participants initially arrived in Brussels for an internship or through the Erasmus student exchange programme, but all of them also had ideas about

the possibility of finding work in Belgium. The length of time the participants had been living in Belgium varied considerably, and the data thus contains experiences of recent entrants as well as persons with longer experience in the Belgian labour market.

Furthermore, three of the participants had already left Brussels at the time when the interview took place. The instability of residence and multiple moves – including circular and onward migration – are characteristic of the mobility of young Europeans. In the previous literature, there is a mixed use of the concepts ‘mobility’ and ‘migration’ in this context, and ‘mobility’ is sometimes selected to underline its instability, as well as the specific – privileged – position of freely moving EU citizens compared to other migrant groups (King et al., 2016: 8). In the articles that form the dissertation I use different expressions (intra-EU migrant, EU migrant citizen, EU migrant), which is related to the varying preferences of the journals regarding the terminology. In Article III, the concept of mobility is also central to the analysis, as it is the concept EU institutions use for the intra-Union movement of EU citizens. Indeed, following the approach of methodological de-nationalism, the ambiguous line between the participants’ status as migrants and citizens is subject to critical scrutiny in this study (see Anderson, 2019).

Instead of aiming to make the sample representative of the overall population of young EU migrants in Brussels, I sought to maximise the study’s capacity to capture the effects of labour market precarity on mobility by using a participant selection criterion that emphasises experiences of unemployment and precarious work (see Flyberg, 2006; Vallas and Christin, 2018). The selected participants did not need to be unemployed at the time of the interview, but current and/or previous unemployment experience(s) were taken as an indication of insecurity experienced in the labour market. At the same time, replying to the call for interviews formulated in the above-mentioned manner suggested a subjective experience of insecurity. The participants’ employment status at the time of the interview varied as well, meaning that some of them narrated their difficulties in the labour market as retrospective accounts while others were describing their presently lived reality. This is a significant factor affecting the positions from which these stories were told, and it was taken into account when analysing the data.

In practice, all the selected participants had been unemployed at some point of their stay in Brussels. In addition, they all had work experiences that could be defined as precarious, although their labour market trajectories during mobility varied considerably. Many had attained formal paid employment, but often in their case different types of temporary contracts followed one another and/or alternated with periods of unemployment. Some of the participants were self-employed, sometimes because freelance work was the norm in their fields (e.g. journalism), and/or because their employers insisted that the work

Table 2. *Participants (information at the time of the interview)*

No.	Gender	Country of Origin	Age	Field of study	Time in Belgium (+ other previous periods of residence in Belgium)	Periods of unemployment while in Brussels	Non-standard work experiences in Belgium: types of contractual arrangements
1	Man	Italy	29	Linguistics and media	5 years	3	Project based, short-term, part-time, voluntary
2	Woman	Finland	34	Social sciences	5 years (+8 months 8 years ago)	2	Internship, part-time, short-term, temporary, false self-employment
3	Woman	Italy	33	Architecture	1 year	1	Internship, casual/oral
4	Woman	Italy	34	Political sciences, Social policy	3 years (+6 months 8 years ago)	1	Interim/weekly-renewable, short-term
5	Man	Finland	29	Natural sciences	1 year (+14 years 5 years ago)	1	Project based
6	Woman	Italy	32	Interpreting	2 years	Under-employed freelancer	Internship, short-term, involuntary self-employment
7	Man	Spain	32	HR management	2 years (+4 years 4 years ago)	2	Internship, short-term
8	Man	Italy	34	Political sciences	5 months	1	Internship
9	Man	Spain	29	Journalism, linguistics	2 years	1	Involuntary self-employment, voluntary
10	Man	Spain	34	Audiovisual media	1 year	1	Involuntary self-employment
11	Woman	Finland	34	Social sciences	6 years	1	Short-term, temporary, project-based, freelance
12	Woman	Finland	30	Linguistics	5 years	1	Temporary, short-term, voluntary
13	Man	Italy	34	Telecommunication engineering	9 years	1	Internship
14	Woman	Finland	34	Humanities	1 year	1	Temporary, voluntary

15	Woman	Denmark	27	International law	4 months (+1 year 3 years ago)	1	Internship
16	Woman	Denmark	33	EU business and Law	4 years	2	Short-term
17	Woman	Spain	27	Architecture	3 years	1	Casual/oral, temporary, voluntary
18	Man	Italy	30	International relations	3 years	1	Internship, interim/weekly- renewable, temporary
19	Man	Spain	31	Humanities	4 years	1, under- employed freelancer	Internship, involuntary self- employment, temporary, voluntary
20	Woman	Finland	33	Communications	9 years	2	Internship, temporary, freelance
21	Woman	Italy	27	Economics and social sciences	1	1	Internship, voluntary
22	Man	Italy	28	Social sciences	9 months	1, under- employed freelancer	Involuntary self- employment, casual/oral, voluntary
23	Man	Italy	29	Social sciences	1 year	1	Internship, false self- employment
24	Woman	Spain	24	Journalism	2 years	1	Internship, short-term, involuntary self- employment, voluntary
25	Woman	Finland	25	International politics	1 year	1	Interim/ weekly- renewable
26	Woman	Spain	34	Journalism	9 years	1	False self- employment, temporary
27	Woman	Spain	23	Social sciences, pedagogy	4 years	3	Casual, oral, involuntary self- employment, short-term, temporary, voluntary

be performed under a ‘false’ self-employment arrangement where self-employment was in reality nominal, and work was performed for a single employer. A few of the participants had semi-voluntarily chosen self-employment in the absence of better alternatives and tried to make ends meet with small, diversified sources of income. Several participants worked through temporary staffing agencies with weekly-renewable contracts. It was also common that, instead of real employment, the participants had been offered

paid or unpaid internships. Some of these internships were financially supported by national or EU-level mobility programmes. Sometimes the internships were followed by further internships for the same or other employers. Many were also doing considerable amounts of voluntary work in fields connected to their professional interest. Additionally, many of the participants had undertaken more or less casual work, often without written contracts, sometimes in their professional field, but more typically in sectors such as hospitality and childcare. The most significant difference between the southern European and Nordic participants' labour market trajectories in Brussels was that, while none of the Nordic participants had undertaken work that was completely irrelevant to their education, even under precarious work arrangements, their southern European peers often had such experiences. The participants' fields of study, the time they had lived in Brussels, their periods of unemployment and the types of non-standard work experiences they had by the time of the interview are summarised in Table 2.

As we can see in Table 2, the participants' educational backgrounds represent a range of academic fields. All the participants had university studies at Master's or Doctoral level. Two of the Finnish participants had not finished their university degrees; one of them, however, had a degree from a University of Applied Sciences (higher vocational education within the Finnish system). The interest in studying the experiences of university-educated EU migrants from younger age cohorts derives from the fact that this is the group most likely to be using their right to free movement, besides being highly exposed to unemployment and precarious work (O'Reilly et al., 2015). While the majority of young Europeans do not opt for intra-EU mobility, the willingness to move correlates with higher education credentials (Eurostat, 2011). Those who choose migration can therefore also be expected to be more work- and achievement-oriented compared to those who do not (King et al., 2016: 6). Furthermore, while education generally forms the best protection against precarious employment (Buchholz et al., 2009), focusing specifically on university-educated migrants makes it possible to observe the impact of being a migrant on their employment position.

All the participants were in their late 20s or early 30s at the time of the interview. Only two Spanish participants were under 25. Thus, most of the participants did not belong to the category of 'youth', i.e. people aged 15-24 years old, as defined in most studies examining youth employment issues (e.g. Madsen et al., 2013). This categorisation is based on the expected lowest age for leaving secondary education (15) and the age at which most individuals with tertiary education leave university or college (25)² (Chung et al., 2012). To be sure, labour market statistics show that young Europeans in the age

² However, in Finland, for example, the median age for finishing university studies is 28 (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2019).

group 15-24 years are the most disadvantaged in terms of risk of unemployment, a problem that was considerably aggravated by the latest economic crisis (Chung et al., 2012). Nevertheless, the focus on the age group of 15-24 in research and policy does not fully grasp the labour market disadvantage and insecurity confronted by young workers in contemporary Europe. By addressing an age group that extends to 34 years of age, this study seeks to cover not only workers entering the labour market from university education, but especially the growing group of young workers who have already entered the labour market but not yet found a secure job (O'Reilly et al., 2019: 11-12). In this way, it aims to capture young people's generally protracted and increasingly nonlinear transitions to more secure employment positions in today's environment and its further implications for their transitions to independent 'adulthood' (Bradley and Devadason, 2008; Chung et al., 2012).

THE MULTI-CONTEXTUAL SETTING

To capture the transnational character of the participants' experiences, my study design is qualitatively comparative in a multi-contextual setting that includes one country of destination (Belgium) and four countries of origin (Finland, Denmark, Italy and Spain). The institutional and economic conditions in these five countries vary significantly as already discussed in Chapter 2.

The study was conducted in Brussels, which can be defined as a hub of free movement in the EU. It is a culturally vibrant global metropolis that stands out with its highly international job market formed around the EU institutions, including a wide range of international NGOs, media outlets and businesses, as well as a lively creative sector. This makes it an attractive destination for qualified workers from all around Europe. Both symbolically and substantively Brussels constitutes a key destination for European-minded young professionals who typically move there in search of international job opportunities (Favell, 2008).

However, the attractiveness of Brussels also produces intense competition for qualified jobs, especially for junior positions (EURES, 2016). In practice, all the participants in the present study described the job market in Brussels as strongly competitive. While there is no systematic data regarding young EU migrants' performance in the labour markets of Brussels, in Belgium the phenomenon of non-standard work is generally associated with young workers, as well as with migrant workers, and work arrangements such as freelance work, temporary agency work, sub-contracted work and occasional work have mushroomed (Caldrini et al., 2014). As the present data also indicates, precarious employment practices at the top end of the Brussels

labour market include a widespread exploitation of internships as a source of free or very cheap qualified labour (also Allen, 2020).

In addition, Belgium is among the EU countries that have adopted increasingly restrictive interpretations regarding the rights of foreign EU citizens. While restricting the migration of non-economically active foreigners has been a long-term political objective in the country, a major policy change was marked by newly adopted measures that specifically targeted EU migrants (Gsir et al., 2016). The increasing popularity of Belgian nationalist and xenophobic parties brought controlling migration, particularly from central and eastern European EU countries, into the political mainstream. The policies developed by the Belgian government as a response to this pressure were, in turn, apt to increase public suspicion towards all intra-EU migrants (Lafleur and Stanek, 2016b: 112–114).

Belgium has sought to control EU citizens' access to its welfare system both by restricting the conditions of social entitlements for those legally residing in its territory and increasingly by restricting access to legal residence. Since 2012, EU migrant citizens have not had access to social assistance during the first three months of their stay, and those categorised as jobseekers upon arrival do not have access to social assistance as long as they retain this status (Meurens and Van Caenaghem, 2016: 16). Furthermore, while EU Regulations 883/2004 and 987/2009 grant EU citizens the right to transfer social entitlements and aggregate contributions made in different EU countries, Belgian rulings limit these rights. At the time when the interviews were conducted, access to the Belgian unemployment benefit system was conditional on having at least one day of work experience under a Belgian employment contract, a requirement that was extended to three months in 2016.

While Belgium is not, by far, the only EU country that has sought to redefine the status of EU migrants (see Mantu et al., 2020), the Belgian case is particularly striking for the state's efforts to enforce restrictive conditionality through expulsions of EU citizens deemed unwanted on economic grounds. In 2011, the Belgian State Secretary for Asylum, Migration and Social Integration made a restrictive interpretation of Directive 2004/38/EC allowing Member States to withdraw the residence certificates of EU citizens deemed to represent an 'unreasonable burden' (Gsir et al., 2016). Data exchange was established between the social security administration and the Belgian immigration office, with considerable discretion in determining if a person constitutes such a 'burden' (Meurens and Van Caenaghem, 2016: 15). Consequently, an unparalleled number of EU citizens (3744 in 2014–2015) received an 'order to leave the territory'. Additionally, the initial requirements for registration also became increasingly restrictive regarding the requirement

to provide evidence of paid work, ‘a genuine chance of finding employment’ or ‘sufficient resources’ (Valcke, 2020).

The two southern European (Italy, Spain) and the two Nordic (Denmark, Finland) countries were selected for the research setting due to the strongly divergent labour market and welfare state conditions for young people in these regions. As described in Chapter 2, the institutional settings in the participants’ countries of origin varied greatly, not only regarding their strategies of labour market deregulation, but also in how far welfare provisions in these countries mitigated or exacerbated young citizens’ dependency on private support (Saraceno, 2016). The welfare systems in the Nordic countries include universalistic provisions that make young people individually entitled to benefits from the age of majority. By contrast, the Italian and Spanish systems largely exclude young people from non-contributory benefits, which are oriented towards older people and families. In addition, young people exposed to precarious work are also often largely excluded from contributory social benefits, because their precarious employment tenure does not render them eligible (Madsen et al., 2013).

The recent decade has witnessed an accelerated intra-EU migration flow of educated young southern Europeans. A number of studies have identified, as the main drivers of these flows, the high levels of youth unemployment, as well as the prevalent precarious working conditions, very low salaries and generally bleak future outlooks among young workers in these countries (Bartolini et al., 2017; Lafleur and Stanek, 2016a). While the migration flows from the Nordic countries are considerably smaller than those from southern Europe, they also largely consist of people who belong to younger age groups and have a higher education qualification (Heikkilä, 2011). In the Nordic countries, unemployment rates for younger workers are significantly lower, and precarious employment is still relatively uncommon by European standards (Madsen et al., 2013). There is little research regarding the labour market experiences of Nordic EU migrants, but as the study of Koikkalainen (2013) indicates, at least for well-educated young Finns economic reasons do not dominate as motivational factors, but, instead, a range of different motives related to lifestyle and personal growth. On average, Finnish migrants appear to end up in relatively good labour market positions in other Member States (Koikkalainen, 2009; see also Spreckelsen et al., 2019). However, as the experiences of the young Finnish and Danish participants in this study show, even the presumably most privileged migrant groups may be exposed to precarious conditions, particularly if they are young. Evidently, as for any migrant group, the conditions they confront in the labour market of the destination country may differ from their pre-migration expectations.

INTERVIEWS

After the first contact, I informed the participants by email about the purpose of the study and the voluntary nature of their participation, as well as about the confidentiality of the research and the data protection policy. I committed to protect confidentiality throughout the research process, which meant complete pseudonymisation of the data already when preparing the transcripts³. I repeated these principles to the participants orally at the beginning of the interview and also made sure to give them an opportunity to ask for clarifications and additional information.

The one-time, face-to-face interviews were conducted in Brussels, except for two. One interview was carried out in Finland and the other via Skype with an Italian residing in South-East Asia. The interviews lasted from one and a half to two and a half hours. They were organised in two sections, the first of which used techniques of narrative interviewing (Andrews et al., 2013), and aimed to elicit free but comprehensive narratives regarding the participants' work and migration experiences (see Annex 2). I started all the interviews by repeating the issues of confidentiality, anonymity, data protection policy and the voluntary nature of the participation after which I briefly framed the interview around their working life and migration experiences. The free narrative section then started with the following questions aimed at eliciting a narrative:

'Could you please tell me, in your own words, what has happened in your life since you graduated from higher education? You can be as detailed as you want. What did you do before moving to Brussels and how did you end up here?'

Before the interview, I asked the participants to send me their resume, which I printed and then used as interview material by placing it on the table at the beginning of the interview. This turned out to be a very effective technique in ensuring that the participants' trajectories in the world of work were covered in detail and in a relatively structured manner, which helped me as a researcher to understand the sequence of experiences and make clarifying questions. This applies also to the one exceptional interview I conducted via Skype, in which case it was particularly helpful to be able to familiarise myself with the 'profile' of the participant in advance. It was also often clear that asking the participants to send their resume to the researcher beforehand had

³ The pseudonymised interview transcripts were stored behind a password and separate from the participants' personal background data. Correspondingly, the participants' resumes and the interview recordings were stored behind a password and these documents will be destroyed at the end of the project.

made them recollect and reflect upon their employment trajectories in Brussels before the interview. In fact, some of them arrived at the interview with prepared sketches about the problems they had faced at different points of their migratory and/or employment paths. Furthermore, having the resume on the table also allowed for discussion of experiences that did not appear in the resume. Indeed, the resumes are highly illuminating documents as they show how participants with fragmented and precarious employment trajectories seek to build coherence in their careers to convince potential employers of their capability, sense of direction, and continual accumulation of experience and skills, sometimes by including unpaid professional work but excluding low-skilled work deemed irrelevant and considered to 'look bad'. In the interviews the participants themselves often reflected on these tensions and pressures.

The second section of the interview was semi-structured: to ensure that enough information was gained on the specific topics reflected in the research questions in case these topics were not spontaneously covered in the free narratives. The participants were asked to describe their experiences of working life and unemployment before and after moving to Belgium, their lives in Brussels, their experiences with local bureaucracies, their awareness of their rights, the problems they faced in obtaining recognition of their rights, their financial subsistence and their future plans and prospects.

The fact that I was not only a university researcher, but also an EU migrant of similar age living in Brussels, often helped to create a rather coequal interviewer and interviewee relationship. My own experiences with the Belgian residency and welfare bureaucracies help me to ask relevant questions regarding possible administrative problems the participants might have faced and was very helpful also in terms of understanding their stories. I believe that being able to discuss these troubles on such a level of detail was reassuring for the participants in that they could expect me to understand their situations. It may also have removed a possible worry of being stigmatised for having been unemployed.

Although the interviews covered sensitive topics, including issues of unemployment, financial troubles, 'illegality', and issues of psycho-physical health, a good rapport was established in most cases. Only in one of the interviews the participant appeared to be surprised by the qualitative and broad scope of the study and asked questions regarding the purpose of the research in the middle of the interview. Even in this case, repeating the objectives of the research and my position as a PhD student at the University of Helsinki convinced the participant to continue the interview till the end. Communication with the participants was conducted in Spanish, Finnish and English. It is possible that the use of English at some level limited the expression of the Danish and Italian participants. However, the majority of

them had excellent English skills and used the language confidently. The interviews were transcribed and the analysis was conducted in the original languages. The interview extracts were translated only when reporting the findings.

WRITTEN FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

The follow-up questions sent to the participants by email in 2018 concerned their work and migration trajectories in the years following the interview, as well as their retrospective views of the impact of their experiences in Brussels on their lives. The aim was to gather systematic information about what had happened to the participants in the years following the interview. However, I only received responses from half of the participants (N=13). In most cases, I was not able to reach the other participants because their contact information had changed. A couple of participants replied, but could not find time to write written answers.

On the other hand, with some of the participants, the initial email with the follow-up questions was followed by a long correspondence, offering participants' deep reflections on their experiences in Brussels and beyond. Hence, while this additional dataset could not be used to systematically analyse the effects of precarity experienced in Brussels for the subsequent life trajectories of the participants due to its limitations, for those participants who responded, the written replies deepened even further the study's capacity to capture how they subjectively perceived their migration and employment experiences. The written answers form a part of the data analysed and reported in Article III.

LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA

One obvious limitation of qualitative data that focuses on persons with experiences of precarity is that it does not provide information regarding the incidence of such experiences among the overall population of young, educated EU migrants (see however Flyberg, 2006). Similarly, while the data exposes in some detail employer practices in the labour markets of Brussels and the administrative practices that shape the rights of precariously employed EU migrants, it offers only limited indications of how prevalent such practices are. While answering these questions was not the objective of the present study, the qualitative evidence provided gives indications regarding relevant topics for future research. These include questions regarding the role of employers in influencing young workers' experiences, their room for manoeuvre and their outcomes in the labour markets of intra-European mobility hubs such as Brussels. The results can also be reflected

against the findings from recent statistically driven studies offering comparative evidence on the working conditions of recent young EU migrant workers (Spreckelsen et al., 2019) and their labour market outcomes when compared with their national peers (Akgüç and Belabvy, 2019).

Second, gendered disparities were not pronounced in the data, although previous evidence show that exposure to precarious employment is markedly gendered, intersecting with other attributes like age and ethnicity (Cranford and Vosko, 2006: 44; Shutes and Walker, 2018), and young EU migrant women are demonstrably less likely to be employed than men (Akgüç and Beblavý, 2019: 404–405; Spreckelsen et al., 2019: 400). In my study, the research design emphasised country of origin, level of education and labour market position over gender. Therefore, my findings are not to be interpreted to be in conflict with the results from previous studies showing gendered patterns of labour market segmentation. The female participants occasionally made remarks regarding situations that they had experienced as unjust labour market competition due to their gender. On the other hand, while female participants seemed to find low-skilled jobs in fields like hospitality and childcare easily, some male participants reported difficulties in finding low-skilled work when no professional work was available. Overall, however, the participants shared similar experiences in the labour market and vis-à-vis state institutions regardless of their gender. This relative absence of gendered differences on the level of experiences is nevertheless an interesting observation, as it can be interpreted to reflect the neoliberal worker-citizen ideal under which women and men are governed in an equal manner. This lack of differences by gender can also partly be understood in relation to the participants' delayed transition to 'adulthood'. The precarious work conditions, among other things, encouraged them to postpone having children as they lacked economic means and stability. The great majority of the participants did not have children, and both the female and the male participants often noted that accepting new family responsibilities while experiencing financial and/or legal insecurity was impossible. Being childless also marked their relationship with the welfare state, as having children might have brought up new gendered issues in relation to restrictive policies such as access to maternity allowance or childcare services (Shutes and Walker, 2018).

Finally, one shortcoming of the research design was that the socio-economic status of the participants' parents was not systematically recorded in the study. The interviews nevertheless contained information regarding the participants' family background, sufficient to consider its impact in the analysis.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It may be noteworthy that a few of the participants may have initially contacted me with hopes of this advancing their job search – if not in any other way than in terms of expanding their networks. One of the interviewees asked me if I would happen to know of interesting PhD opportunities or have helpful contacts in Belgian/Finnish universities. Moreover, while I emphasised every time that I was requesting their resumes strictly for my own use, several participants commented that I was free to distribute their resumes to any contacts I might have. I did advise the participants as far as I was able to, but also made it clear that I was not in the position to help them to find employment. For the great majority of the participants the motivation for participating was clearly a wish to tell their story and to make the problems they had faced known. One participant told me that he agreed to the interview mainly because he wanted to help me with my PhD work.

While the advantage of resumes as research material is their public nature, the interviews themselves contained various types of sensitive information, including stories of how the participants had bypassed their legal obligation to inform the authorities of their presence in the country and sensitive health information. For this reason, I have paid particular attention to data protection, as well as protecting the anonymity of the participants in all the research publications, for example, by not including overly specific information about their fields of study, their employers or the content of their work.

3.2. ANALYSING PERSONAL NARRATIVES IN CONTEXT

Earlier research has shown the ability of personal narratives to illuminate, from the individual's point of view, a person's particular social position and location in social structures, while also revealing how agency can operate at this locus (see Maynes et al., 2008: 129-132). Personal narratives are not only apt to reveal how individuals place themselves in terms of social categories such as age, gender, nationality and class, but also the person's place in the 'order of things' by offering insights from the person's lived experiences in particular social, economic, political-historical, institutional and cultural settings (Anthias, 2002). Brannen and Nilsen (2011) argue that a comparative biographical approach can advance our understanding of individual experience particularly when placing it in context and, in this way, demonstrating the interrelatedness of individual agency and social-institutional and economic structures. In this study, thorough

contextualisation formed an integral part of the analysis. In practice, this meant a parallel reading of the legal and policy documents as well as the existing research addressing the legal-institutional environment in which the participants told their stories. This also reinforced the cross-disciplinary nature of the study as it served to draw links between these experiences and discussions from fields such as EU legal studies (see Simola, 2020) and comparative welfare state research (Article II).

Furthermore, as Devadason shows in her study (2008), the increasing insecurity, fragmentation and non-linearity of employment paths influence the stories contemporary young adults tell about themselves (Brannen and Nilsen, 2011; Daskalaki and Simosi, 2018; Devadason, 2008). In this context, young adults' aspirations appear constituted in interplay with institutional regimes, as well as with the opportunities and constraints they face in the labour market. Examining how young adults' personal narratives are structured around employment, not only in the past and in the present moment, but also in relation to their future hopes and dreams, may not only reflect their immediate situation or options, but also expose their versions and fantasies of the 'good life' towards which they aspire (Berlant, 2011; Devadason, 2008).

In this respect, as Maynes et al. (2008:16) suggest, the analysis of personal narratives can be particularly effective when explicitly acknowledging the complex social and historical processes involved in the construction of the self. Not only structural conditions, but also the dominant public discourses constrain people's stories about themselves, and analysing personal narratives can therefore shed light on the power of hegemonic discourses and the way in which they normalise and legitimise inequalities (Cederberg, 2014). Importantly, as Devadason (2008: 1133) argues, the key to the analysis of cross-national variance in personal narratives is recognising the fact that many of the taken-for-granted discourses may not be articulated precisely because they are hegemonic. All in all, personal narratives can provide insights into individual life trajectories, aspirations, and subjectivities in connection with collective forces and institutions beyond the individual (Maynes et al., 2008). This, I argue, makes them particularly fruitful for exploring lived experiences of precarity (see Alberti et al., 2018; see Paret and Gleeson, 2016).

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In empirical terms, the study combines work on analysis of personal narratives (Andrews et al., 2013; Cederberg, 2014) and a comparative biographical approach (Brannen and Nilsen, 2011; Devadason, 2008) with

deductive qualitative content analysis in which the analytical questions and categories used are derived from existing theory (Mayring, 2000).

I formulated the research questions cyclically: preliminary empirical observation of the data directed me towards existing literature on precarious work, precarious citizenship, varieties of welfare capitalism and neoliberal subjectivity. In this way, I proceeded to formulate the empirical research questions based on preceding theoretical understanding of these broad phenomena. The theoretically motivated research questions were in turn operationalised into empirical analysis questions. This process was not unidirectional, but I moved iteratively back and forth between the data and the theory throughout the research process. The different levels of the deductive process are summarised in Table 3.

In Article I, I focus on the role of local bureaucracies (the municipal residency administration in particular) in exercising their discretion over the status and rights of EU citizens. The analysis of the participants' narratives addresses the vulnerabilities associated with their insecure legal statuses in their interconnections with precarious work. How did administrative actors draw and enforce boundaries between different categories of employment status and work arrangements when determining the participants' access to residence rights? What implications did these boundary enforcement practices have on the participants' legal status in Belgium? In what ways did these policies and administrative practices affect their ability to rely on and make claims for their rights? What kind of consequences have the temporary and insecure legal statuses had for the participants' room for manoeuvre in the Belgian labour market?

In Article II, jointly written with Sirpa Wrede, we develop and apply a tripartite approach to welfare conditionality. We analyse through the participants' lived experiences how their access to income support shaped their access to financial independence. The analysis first examines the barriers that the participants faced in accessing income support in Belgium due to their precarious employment paths. We pay attention to the interplay between the welfare and residency administrations in enforcing various types and levels of conditionality regulations set at national and EU level. In the second section we add a third analytical level and look at how the welfare arrangement in the participants' countries of origin further shaped their access to income support when they were unable to access such support in Belgium. We then further examine how the differences between the European welfare models influenced their access to financial independence and/or their further exposure to precarious work. Analysing the implications of the interaction between the differing welfare systems through EU migrants' lived experiences has allowed us to illuminate the ways in which migration

intervenes in family support relationships, as well as the complexity of migrants' own actions when confronted by policies of conditionality.

Finally, in Article III, I analyse the kinds of meanings the participants attach to mobility in relation to work, the subjectivities they enact in these accounts and the ways in which these subjectivities align with the requirements of precarious labour. Drawing on Farrugia's (2019) ideal typical notion of 'subjects of passion', I use the concept of passion to capture the extent to, and the ways in which, the participants associate work and/or migration (or migration as a means for achieving work) with development and realisation of meaningful subjectivity. The aim is to understand how the participants' autonomy, choices and meanings given to these choices are governed under hegemonic neoliberalism and also to examine the influence of the related policy frameworks and legal-institutional arrangements. I pay particular attention to issues of money in order to ground the analysis on the actual opportunities and constraints to enact mobile, neoliberal subjectivity.

Table 3. *The deductive process of formulating the analysis questions*

	Article I	Article II	Article III
Theoretical problem derived from previous literature	The global spread of precarious citizenship and practices of boundary/border enforcement. Implications for young EU migrants in precarious work positions?	The impact of the variation in European welfare models on young EU migrants' access to financial independence.	Neoliberal subject formations as an instrument for governing young EU migrants' lives in conditions of precarious labour markets.
Empirical research questions	How do the increasing precarisation of employment relations, the changing social and legal norms regulating EU migration and the local implementation of these norms intersect on the level of young EU migrants' lives, and with what implications?	How does young EU migrants' access to income support in their country of origin and their country of destination shape their access to financial independence in conditions of precarious work?	How are neoliberal subjectivities constituted and lived out by young highly educated workers in the context of EU migration, and with what implications?
The operationalisation of empirical analysis questions	A reconstruction of the participants' employment trajectories based on their narratives and resumes. A systematic mapping of the contingencies between these trajectories and the participants' legal status and rights.	A tripartite approach that looks at the regulation and implementation of conditionality in young EU citizens' access to income support by three parties: the EU, the migrants' country of origin and their country of destination. Further analysis of the implications of this access in terms of their access to financial independence.	An analysis of the meanings the participants attach to mobility in relation to work, the subjectivities they enact in these accounts and the ways in which these subjectivities align with the requirements of precarious labour. Grounding the analysis in the actual opportunities to enact neoliberal subjectivity through an analysis of the participants' accounts of money and subsistence.

4. CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PRECARIOUS EU MIGRATIONS: DRAWING OUT ISSUES OF PASSION, MONEY, CITIZENSHIP AND INEQUALITY

In this chapter I summarise the results from the three articles that form the empirical basis of the dissertation. The chapter is structured to answer the broader research questions set for the overall study. The objective is to draw a connection between the findings from the separate articles to create a synthesis that allows me to outline the contribution the study makes to the previous research discussions in which it partakes and to the study of young people's EU migration in particular. In the final chapter of the dissertation, I draw broader conclusions from the research as a whole.

4.1. UNDERSTANDING YOUNG EU MIGRANTS' COMPLIANCE WITH REGIMES OF PRECARIOUS WORK AND PRECARIOUS CITIZENSHIP

The three articles explore various intricate factors that help to explain why the participants acquiesce (or do not acquiesce) to their precarious conditions at work and, more generally, in life. In order to demonstrate the interconnections of the results from the articles, I start from an examination of the participants' original motivations for migration, showing the connection of these motivations to their search for self-realisation through work (see Farrugia, 2019; see Rose, 1998; see Weeks, 2011). I then present results regarding the barriers the participants faced in their access to social rights in Belgium and the subsequent impact of these barriers on their exposure to precarious work. Finally, I discuss the role of Belgian policies and the local administrations in Brussels in producing precarity among young EU migrants by enforcing conditionality on their legal status, and in imposing on them self-responsibility for their own survival.

EXPRESSIONS OF NEOLIBERAL SUBJECTIVITY AND MOBILITY FOR PASSION

In Article III, I apply and develop the concept of passion for the study of highly qualified EU migration, arguing that this concept has particular

explanatory value when highly qualified intra-EU migration takes place under precarious labour conditions. In the article I define 'passion' as committed self-identification with one's chosen work/career, and analyse the extent to and the ways in which the participants associate work and/or migration (or migration as a means for achieving work) with the development and realisation of meaningful subjectivity. The article depicts how the participants' migration was very often driven by their aspirations to do work offering opportunities for self-realisation, self-development and self-fulfilment, rather than economic gain or social mobility. Thus, in line with Farrugia's (2019) argument regarding contemporary middle-class workers being 'subjects of passion', the analysis shows how viewing work and 'career' as the realisation of passionate investments crucially defined the migration of the study's young participants (also Farrugia, 2020). For some of the participants the passion was to work in a particular professional field or on a specific subject matter (e.g. human rights), while for many others working in an international environment was a passion in its own right, described as an important part of their self-identity and referred to as 'my dimension'. Some of them expressed their passion explicitly in their narratives by reference to a 'dream', a 'passion' or a 'vocation'. In addition, the passionate attachment to work was also typically articulated in their narratives through negation, emphasising how unrelated their motivations regarding work and migration were to money. Overall, regardless of their country of origin or their professional field, in the participants' narratives mobility often appears as an instrument, or even the prerequisite, to achieving work corresponding to their passion.

In Article III, I also investigate, through the participants' narratives, the implications of national and EU-level policies, programmes and discourses that encourage young people to invest in their mobility, and in this way, in their enhanced 'employability'. In fact, the majority of the participants had initially arrived in Brussels either for an internship or through the Erasmus student exchange programme, which had offered them both an institutional framework and financial support for initiating migration. The analysis supports the view that these programmes have normalised, among young, qualified Europeans, the practice of intra-EU mobility by making it integral to their ideals of successful labour market transitions (Varriale, 2019; Yoon, 2014), and that this normalisation happens by depicting young people as entrepreneurs of their own human capital (Courtois, 2020; Nikunen, 2017). This was how Riina, a Finn who had seized an international internship opportunity that had led to a temporary job before she became unemployed, explained her initial motivations:

'I felt the need to build my own international experience, since I had not, at any point of my studies, done an internship or lived abroad, or done anything of the sort and I missed such experience.'

From the perspective of neoliberal governmentality, the institutional encouragement of mobility therefore appears as mechanisms of power that function by augmenting opportunities and choices for young people while, in parallel, encouraging forms of self-developing subjectivity (Foucault, 2008; Rose, 1998).

In Article III, I show how the promotion of a self-entrepreneurial attitude towards mobility is problematic to the extent to which it encourages them to tolerate unpaid work and precarious labour conditions as inherently self-chosen and 'normal'. The data shows that such relation to labour mobility can lead to practices of self-precarisation with sometimes detrimental implications. For instance, Alicia, from Spain, explained how she wanted to stay in Brussels, although she had not been able to find paid, professional work after the initial internship that had brought her there. She sought to gain professional experience by doing further internships while also investing a major part of her time in a self-initiated voluntary project in the area she considered to be her '*vocation*'. In the interview she justified this decision to remain in Brussels as her only option, regardless of the harsh conditions she had encountered there and the fact that possibilities for finding more stable work might have existed in Spain:

'My grandfather said: "why don't you come to Spain now that they are opening competitions for positions in public administration? ... You get a stable and permanent position". I told him: "yes grandpa, but no. I'm not going to work in the post or do whatever work in the administration". So my only option is to stay [in Brussels]. ... It's my great and amazing option, but I need to start from the bottom, it must be done... It's what I decided to do, and in what I'm good at, humanities, journalism and writing. ... I need to keep on working to find a way ... to live from these things.'

Indeed, the meanings the participants gave to mobility in their 'quest for passion' often influenced the extent to which migration became a driver of precarisation in their lives. Their narratives support Scharff's (2016) argument that entrepreneurial worker subjects are leaned to assume their responsibility for managing opportunities and constraints, embracing risk and hiding possible injuries. Like Alicia, many participants from different countries expressed conformity with the flexible, entrepreneurial attitude required in the precarious labour market environment, which needs to be seen partly as a result of their belief that the tolerance for precarious living and working conditions was the prerequisite for them ever achieving work where they could use their talents and realise their passion (see Lorey, 2006). Although there were dissenting voices and, for instance, many said that they were aware of the poor chances of internships functioning as stepping-stones

to real employment, such a critique was not easily translated into dissident behaviour. Alicia, for example, was highly critical about the uncertain limbo she had been led into:

'[T]hey tell us that we need to go through the hoops and we go through the hoops. I'm doing things because I'm told these things are beneficial for me, because that's what you need to do... but what they are telling you to do is not even guaranteeing you a future these days.'

Nonetheless, Alicia had accepted to do repetitive internships while making her living in low-skilled, short-term jobs.

THE RELEVANCE OF MONEY, EVEN FOR MIGRANTS PURSUING THEIR PASSION

While the participants very generally appeared to have internalised the imperative of adaptability and continuous self-development (see also Bradley and Devadason, 2008), it is also clear in the data that it was their generalised exposure to insecurity and lack of safeguards that made it particularly difficult for many of them to renounce their precarious conditions (see also Lorey, 2006). Critically, the data shows that their insecurity was not only due to the difficult labour market, but their precarious labour position also exposed them to state policies restricting their rights as EU citizens.

None of the participants were inactive, but even when not employed, they were all engaged in paid or unpaid internships and other forms of unremunerated work and training, while often feverishly searching for paid employment. At the same time, most of them lived through periods of insufficient or no income, and were often effectively in need of income support. Nevertheless, as the analysis in Article II shows, most of those who had made claims for income support (unemployment benefits or social assistance) in Belgium had been denied access, typically because their work histories were inconsistent and composed of temporary and non-standard contractual arrangements, possibly both in Belgium and in the country where they had lived before their arrival in Brussels, and they thus lacked the contributions required. Belgium has followed the European trend towards stringent conditionality criteria for all welfare applicants, increased job search requirements, and sanctions within the unemployment insurance scheme (Clegg, 2007). Article II shows how these general eligibility requirements have been combined with the conditionality rulings targeting EU migrants in particular, thus constituting additional barriers to the participants' access to welfare state support. The data then shows how depriving the young EU

migrants from social protection clearly increased their adaptability to their employers' demands for flexibility (see O'Reilly et al., 2015).

For instance, Saara had left her permanent job in Finland to do additional university studies in Germany. In the interview, she described her dream of building an international career. She arrived in Brussels for an internship, and subsequently found work in a local firm. However, she was dismissed from her job after only five months, and was deemed ineligible for unemployment benefits because she had not made sufficient contributions in Belgium. As a recently arrived EU migrant, she was not eligible for social assistance. Her narrative then illustrates how the exclusion from social protection benefits can shatter the financial security of EU migrants, with further negative implications for their leeway in the labour market. After half a year of frantic job searching, Saara found a new placement on consecutive temporary contracts. In the interview, she described how her unemployment experience had made her insecure and fearful. These strong feelings prompted her to accept her later employers' demands for flexibility, even when these demands did not allow her time for recovery after she fell ill with cancer. Saara explained how she had felt coerced to hide her illness to have her contract renewed:

'I worked there for two years... but all the time it was like "we can kick you out if you don't perform"... and sometimes I worked 12-14 hours per day. ... And the last spring I had to be operated on [for a cancer]. I was out of the office for four days and the rest of the spring I worked with a bleeding [wound]. I even had some complications... but [my boss asked me]: "Can you keep this project or not?" And I thought, if that's what it takes, I will keep it... But then at the end of the summer I had a [burnout] ... [And the doctor said] "you cannot go back to work". And I said that "I have to go, I want them to renew my contract!" ... The unemployment experience had an impact: I'm crazily afraid of being dismissed and ready to renounce many of my rights because of that fear.'

As Saara's narrative suggests, the interplay between the participants' passion (in her case for an 'international career'), their fear of failure and their financial insecurity produced an acceptance of precarious terms of work. The analysis focusing on the insecure material conditions, under which many of the participants lived, clearly shows how access to income (either paid employment or social entitlements) was of critical importance even for the young workers who moved in search of self-fulfilling work.

EMERGENCE OF PRECARIOUS CITIZENSHIP WITHIN THE EU FREE MOVEMENT REGIME

Besides the social security administration, the residency administration is another determinative site where conditionality is enforced on EU migrants' rights in Belgium. EU citizens are required to report their presence at local town halls, which then determine whether they are entitled to reside in Belgium after the initial three-month period during which their residence is unqualified. If so, they are granted a residence certificate with a national registration number, a key identification document required in Belgium for most administrative transactions and access to services (see also Valcke, 2020). The Brussels-Capital Region is composed of 19 communes that administer residence registration under the direction of the Federal Immigration Office.

EU legislation refers to clear-cut categories of 'workers', 'jobseekers' and 'non-active citizens', and the central aspect is the disparities in terms of temporariness of rights for people classified under these categories and the fact that their 'expiration-dates' are contingent on conditions and subject to administrative discretion. In Article I, I show how in Belgium's administrative practice these normative definitions were translated into indeterminate and changeable requirements to demonstrate employment contracts. Furthermore, as reported in other studies (Meurens and Van Caeneghem, 2016: 18–19; O'Brien et al., 2015: 83), only certain types of contracts are considered in Belgium as adequate to render individuals eligible for the status of 'worker' and its associated rights⁴. Hence, the participants who sought to register their residence were required to provide evidence of consistent, paid employment and, in this way, their right to reside legally on a longer-term basis was rendered contingent on their contractual success (Somers, 2008). However, due to their precarious employment trajectories composed of temporary, non-standard, unpaid and/or informal work arrangements and periods of unemployment, many of the participants were unable to provide such proof. Some of them sought to register and were classified as jobseekers but not granted the residence certificate. On occasion, front-line officers insisted on a strictly temporary residence right: the participants were told they had only three months to find employment, after which time they would have to leave the country. Also, any claim made for social assistance could lead to withdrawal of the residence permit on the basis of representing an

⁴ Reportedly, demonstrating 'genuine and effective work' in Belgium requires a legitimate employment contract that complies with labour law in terms of minimum thresholds for remuneration and hours (in principle, 12 hours per week). There is evidence that short-term contracts have not been qualified as proof of 'genuine and effective' work by municipalities. Volunteers are also excluded from this definition, while data regarding the treatment of apprentices and internships is lacking (Meurens and Van Caeneghem, 2016: 18–19; O'Brien et al., 2015: 84–85).

‘unreasonable burden’ on Belgium’s social assistance system (see also Lafleur and Mescoli, 2018; Valcke, 2020), and the welfare and residency administration hence worked in unison to enforce various types and levels of conditionality.

To illustrate, I recount the story of Paula. She came to Brussels from Spain through the Erasmus programme, and decided to stay in Belgium after her graduation as she saw no professional prospects in Spain. However, she had difficulties in getting her professional diploma recognised. This process lasted several years, partly because Paula had problems paying for the administrative costs. She thus attempted to access the professional integration benefit, aimed at providing a financial buffer for recent graduates in Belgium. However, although she belonged to the targeted age category (under 25-year-olds) and was able to demonstrate the extensive job searching that is required within this scheme, she was deemed ineligible, as she had not graduated from a Belgian university. Instead, she was accused of abusing the system:

‘I was innocent enough to think that maybe, if I get positive evaluation [of the job search requirements], I could be entitled to something. But no, they even called me a “social parasite” [at the employment office]... It seems to me that the European Union is pulling my leg. You come here and there isn’t any kind of help for young people. I mean I just finished studying. How do they think I’ll survive?’

Paula survived on low-paid, short-term and on-call jobs, mostly without written contracts, in the service and care sectors, and by teaching language classes. However, when she attempted to register at the city hall, an officer determined that her work contributions and job search efforts failed to form a basis for residency in the country:

‘I never had a contract longer than three months and that was not good enough. I had to go and ask, and they were telling me different things. Then when I returned [to the city hall] they gave me a paper saying, ‘If by this and this date you haven’t found work, expulsion from the Belgian territory.’ And then I didn’t return.’

Preceding critical migration literature identifies as root causes for migrant workers’ vulnerability the limitations of rights and protections associated with insecure citizenship statuses; temporariness and deportability (i.e. the threat of forced removal from the national territory); and dependence on employers for status and rights (Anderson, 2010; De Genova and Peutz, 2010; Lori, 2017; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013). In Article I, I argue that a potential for precarious citizenship (Lori, 2017; also Goldring and Landolt, 2011) is

emerging in the context of EU free movement, and it should therefore be considered as one explanatory variable for understanding the pressure on young EU migrants to accept precarious jobs. The story of Christina, another Spaniard, also shows how the evolution of the participants' legal status in Belgium could become contingent on their trajectory in the world of work. Christina decided to stay in Brussels after finishing her Erasmus year at a Belgian university as her professor had given her promises of future work opportunities that later turned out to be unpaid. Lacking financial resources, she was not able to accept his offer:

Christina: 'So the only thing I found was a coffee shop... And I asked [the manager] for a contract because I needed it to be able to register at the municipality and she told me that during the winter she didn't have much work and that she couldn't....'

Author: 'And did you manage to register?'

Christina: 'When I finished my final project I went to the municipality. I didn't register and they told me that I could come back in 5-6 months. So after six months I went and I got my national registration number and from that moment on I could get registered at Actiris [employment office]... And now just when I received the attestation of my national registration number I was told that I need to go back in October to find out whether they accept me as a resident here. I mean I don't understand how it works. I asked but I wasn't offered any information.'

Christina had worked as a waiter and a nanny, and she had also undertaken some professional projects, but in none of these relationships had the employer been willing to provide her with a formal employment contract. Hence, her legal status was effectively in the hands of her employers. Her unsettled legal status also meant an inability to draw upon any state protection, making her subsistence dependent on accepting further precarious jobs (see Anderson, 2010: 311).

THE IMPOSITION OF SELF-RESPONSIBILITY

Particularly central in the data is the participants' profound uncertainty of their rights, resulting not only from the lack of straightforward EU legislation, but critically also from the inexplicit nature of Belgian policy and the indeterminate way in which it is enforced by the local administrations. Ignoring the procedural safeguards set out in the Free Movement Directive (2004/38), the Belgian government has not offered information to the general public or to the persons directly affected regarding the grounds for the

expulsions or the legal or economic consequences of an order to leave the territory (Valcke, 2020). The findings in Article I point to a particularly consequential role of local administration in producing ambiguity, insecurity and temporariness of status for migrants in precarious work arrangements. In fact, the data indicates that the residence registration requirements laid down for EU citizens have varied between the municipalities of Brussels and even between officers of the same office (see also Valcke, 2020).

The general confusion around these policies and practices have led to rumours circulating of other EU migrants' experiences, and for some participants the threat of potential expulsion became a motivation for avoiding all contact with the authorities. This was especially the case among Italians and Spaniards as these nationalities have been among the most affected by the practice of expulsion (Lafleur and Stanek, 2016b), but the data also contains stories of Finnish participants being threatened by expulsion. Some participants defined their own status in Belgium as 'illegal' or 'clandestine', and while none was well enough informed to be sure what the actual consequences of an expulsion order would be, they had considered it safer not to register their presence or, if they nevertheless had started the registration process, not to claim social entitlements. In fact, the state-enforced uncertainty of status and rights had effects that deceptively resembled the 'administrative death' that has been the real consequence of actual expulsions (see Meurens and Van Caeneghem, 2016). Spaniard Alfredo addressed in the interview the social context the practice of expulsion had created:

'So, all this has an impact on you. In reality you're afraid that this will happen to you so you don't ask for what you're entitled to. If you're entitled to it, I mean, I don't know because I never asked... How many rights we have can change every month depending on the laws they have. If you act thinking that you have the same rights as a Belgian you're going to have a bad scare... They have expelled 400 Spaniards. If you don't want to be one of these people you're not going to ask for anything... It's not [only] that we don't have rights but that we think [we have] rights that we don't really have and that you realise this now, when you're here.'

Importantly, the data shows how, by depicting the poor and precariously employed EU migrants as undeserving of the rights of EU citizenship in public debates, policy and administrative practice (Lafleur and Mescoli, 2018), the Belgian state managed to render many of the young participants into subjects responsible for their own survival. While most of them were critical about these policies, they saw little room for contesting them, especially as they were constrained by money and time. For instance, Luca, an Italian sociologist,

working as a bicycle courier, expressed that he had accepted the condition of being on his own:

'Since I didn't find a proper job, I didn't register so far ... I want to contribute somehow and, then, if I am in a position to apply for unemployment benefit I will do [it]... It's going to be hard to make my dreams come true in this working environment and system. I feel that I have to fight and struggle and to achieve my goals by myself. I feel on my own at the moment.'

The social context created through the restrictive policies thus both coerced and persuaded the young participants to renounce the rights associated with EU citizenship.

4.2. ANALYSING INSTITUTIONAL DRIVERS OF INEQUALITY AMONG YOUNG EU MIGRANTS IN A MULTI-CONTEXTUAL SETTING

The qualitatively comparative analysis in the multi-contextual research setting allowed me to also address potential disparities within the group of young EU migrants studied in terms of their autonomy, room for manoeuvre in the labour market and their ability to use their freedom of movement to achieve financially independent positions and work corresponding to their passions. The analytical focus was placed, in particular, on the strongly differing institutional arrangements on the national levels in southern Europe and the Nordic countries, their interaction with the EU-level regulations, and their role in shaping the material conditions of migration for different groups and individuals.

While there is a rapidly growing body of research on EU migrants' social rights, this research has mostly concentrated on the interaction of EU law with national laws and practices in creating differential access to welfare in their destination country (Dwyer et al., 2019; Pennings and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2018; Shutes, 2016). Drawing on comparative welfare state literature, Article II proposes a tripartite approach that takes into account the variation in the ways in which the welfare models in the participants' countries of origin support young people's labour market transitions by enabling their access to social entitlements. The analysis shows how migration puts the participants under the influence of several welfare models at the same time, making their access to social entitlements contingent not only on the welfare conditionality applied in their destination country, but also on the welfare and employment policies of their countries of origin. The analysis shows that especially the

variation in the level of de-familialisation effects, that is, the extent to which welfare provisions in their respective countries of origin were set up to mitigate or exacerbate young people's dependence on private support, impacted both their room for manoeuvre and access to independence in multiple and complex ways.

The welfare systems in Denmark, Finland, Italy and Spain differ greatly regarding the availability, generosity and conditionality of support they provide for young people and recent graduates (Chevalier, 2016: 14). The Italian and Spanish systems largely exclude young people from non-contributory benefits and the extensive requirements for employment also hinder workers with short and fragmented experiences from accessing contributory benefits (Chevalier, 2016; Madsen et al., 2013). Within this region, protracted dependence on parents has become the most common manner of coping with the risk young people face in the labour market, and family cohabiting arrangements a principal means of support (Arundel and Lennartz, 2017; Knijn, 2012). In contrast, young people in Denmark and Finland are eligible for non-contributory benefits, recent graduates have facilitated access to unemployment benefits and the duration of benefits is generally longer. Despite the spread of workfarist ideology within this region too, the states are still trusted to be responsible for the welfare of all adult citizens and support their freedom and independence to make their own choices (Devadason, 2008; O'Reilly et al., 2019).

The analysis shows how the barriers the participants confronted in obtaining access to income support in Belgium accentuated the importance of the policies in their countries of origin. In this respect, a critical difference appeared: the de-familialising welfare policies in the Nordic countries (Chevalier, 2016) showed aptitude in shielding their young citizens to some extent, as they normally had access to contributory and/or non-contributory benefits within these systems. Some of the Nordics, in fact, perceived their domestic welfare system as their primary safety net, and did not even try to engage with the Belgian system but instead returned to their countries of origin when they lost their jobs in Belgium (see Ehata and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2017). Some others relied on their domestic unemployment benefits to be able to return to Belgium to search for new employment.

Conversely, the lack of access to such benefits for young people in Italy and Spain often resulted in the participants from these countries not being entitled to income support in any country. Their domestic work experiences were often entirely composed of internships, non-standard temporary employment, and/or informal work. Hence, usually they had no entitlement to unemployment benefits within their domestic welfare systems and were therefore unable to transfer benefits for the initial period of their stay. In most cases they had neither domestic work contributions to aggregate, nor access to

unemployment benefits or minimum income support if they decided to return (Bruzelius et al., 2017). The few participants who had prior entitlement to unemployment benefits had exhausted the limited coverage period before they moved to Belgium. Overall, the findings suggest the southern welfare model was little able to buffer the young workers from these countries against the precarity in their destination country.

DIFFERENTIATIONS IN TERMS OF AUTONOMY, ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE AND ACCESS TO INDEPENDENCE

For many of the Italian and Spanish participants how much their parents were able to support them became one of the most important determinants of their financial security during their time as migrants. However, in this respect, important disparities appeared between young migrants from different social backgrounds according to the resources of their families. These disparities were clearly reinforced in the context of policies that deprived them of institutional protections.

Indeed, some of the Spanish and Italian participants explained that they were unwilling or unable to ask their parents for money, because of the financial strain their parents were under. At times, their parents were only able to offer their children the possibility of returning home and being part of the family household (see Arundel and Lennartz, 2017). In practice, many of them – and some of the Nordic participants – returned to their parents during a period of unemployment, often intending to return to Brussels when new job opportunities arose or to continue their job search. However, many of the Italian and Spanish participants had initially made the decision to migrate at least partly to be able to move out of their parental home, and for this reason too, they were often strongly reluctant to return. For instance, Marta had looked intensively for work in a field in which Italy offered her no opportunities. She did not register her residence in Brussels, where her subsistence was based on her minimal savings from a previous EU-funded internship grant. She explained:

'I still have money for two months now. After that I don't know... My mom asked me to come [home] right after. I said yeah yeah. I don't want to go back. No no... Now I'm looking for even a part-time job in a restaurant. I don't really care.'

Hence, for the Spanish and Italian participants, mobility in many cases appeared as an ambivalent 'choice', defined by the absence of opportunities in their home country. I suggest that the fact that many of them rejected the option of returning, even under the most adverse living conditions, needs to

be understood in relation to the way in which they associated the return with relinquishing their passion and, thus, opportunities for a meaningful life. At the same time, for most of them mobility was also an attempt to escape the extremely precarious working conditions prevalent in the labour markets in these countries (see also Bartolini et al., 2017). Nicola, for instance, explained that his desire to leave Italy was connected to what he perceived as a ‘*complete lack of appreciation for young talents*’ who are treated ‘*as slaves*’ by Italian employers. Through migration, he searched for opportunities to do what he ‘*really wanted to do*’ and build an international career that would allow him to exploit all his skills and abilities.

However, while refusing the idea of returning, many of the young southern Europeans were forced to accept minimal incomes, living with friends or in cohabiting arrangements and settling for any work regardless of its conditions or content. Indeed, many of them held multiple jobs in parallel, sometimes combining unpaid professional work with low-skilled ‘bread-and-butter’ jobs that nevertheless left them without an adequate income and highly dependent on private support. Also, the temporariness and uncertainty of legal status could further decrease their leeway for navigating the highly competitive job market and hamper their opportunities to be more ambitious with their job search (see Lori, 2017: 752). Moreover, the lack of money translated into less time to invest in employability-enhancing activities as well as time lost to recover from work.

Some were also forced to return. Alicia, as already described in the previous section, was combining unpaid professional work with parallel, low-paid and low-skilled jobs. These jobs, she said, did not leave her with enough time for physical and mental recovery, while also blocking her opportunities to invest in her vocation:

‘I belong without belonging... I don’t belong because I don’t have money to live next month or the one after... Or [I need to do work] that takes away my time and energy and has no prospects, only to continue [living] here.... Obviously, I need to have an objective to stay here and my objective would be to continue with the [voluntary] project. But I’ve got to the point where I cannot continue ... I’ve decided I will return [to Spain] at the end of the month ... because I need to rest... I want to invest in my vocation but here I can’t because I’m always depending on the money and on time and I have neither.’

Indeed, for some of the southern European participants in particular, the flexibility and adaptability in the form of precarious contractual arrangements, combined with low or no salaries, often turned out to be – as an actually lived reality – incompatible with the imposition of self-responsibility through the workfarist policies.

At the same time, the way in which some of the Nordic participants were able to draw money from their domestic welfare systems allowed them to continue fostering their employability in Brussels through further education, unpaid work and/or searching for better jobs. Like the narrative of Saara recounted in the previous section illustrates, they, as well, were often prepared to accept the requirements of a high level of flexibility and precarity, as long as the work experience gained was perceived as valuable for pursuing their chosen work. Some had also established personal ties in Belgium, which also made them more tied to the Brussels labour market, in addition to which some others, like Saara, were kept in the city by their passion for working in an international environment (see Alberti, 2014, 2016; see also Sotkasiira and Gawlewicz, 2020). When experiencing low or no income, or delayed or denied access to social protection in Belgium, even the young Nordics were often forced to turn to their parents for financial support. However, long-lasting parental dependence was unusual and mitigated for them, particularly because of their wider options for relying on their domestic welfare systems. In addition, their domestic labour markets were also generally perceived as offering more and better opportunities for young workers. Hence, many young Nordics did consider returning to their home country as an option, were the conditions in Brussels to turn overly harsh. For example, Riina, unable to find a new professional position, left Belgium for Finland soon after her temporary contract was not extended: *'I decided that, oh well, I can't be bothered to struggle on here; I will just go home now'*. The wider options of the Nordic participants were reflected in the fact that none of them undertook work in Brussels that was completely irrelevant to their professional goals.

4.3. PRECARIOUS EU MIGRATIONS UNDER NEOLIBERAL GOVERNANCE

In this final section I outline how the empirical results presented in this chapter advance the research discussions in which they partake as well as our understanding of the conditions under which young workers move within the EU. The study addressed the influence of neoliberal governance on precarity as experienced by the young participants of the study. The analysis placing their narratives in this macro-context sheds light on powerful structures and discourses that both enable and limit their autonomy. The analysis traces interconnected dimensions of precarity that the participants experienced not only in terms of labour, but also in terms of citizenship. Furthermore, the study also addresses the ways in which neoliberal governance interfered in their mobility through its power over their subjectivities. I wish to highlight four critical aspects in particular.

First, the study draws out the specific and complex ways in which the cultural shift towards citizens' personal responsibility shapes the current environment for young people's intra-EU mobility (see Kelly, 2006; Somers, 2008). This is an important aspect due to the way in which labour market regulations and state provisions have been re-organised across the EU countries, with differential implications for young EU migrant workers from different origins (Hansen and Hager, 2012; Kalleberg and Vallas, 2018). Additionally, the study also shows how it affects them through its influence over the increasingly prevalent understanding of EU citizenship as a status under which rights need to be 'earned'. The study points out some major controversies around the policies to which young EU citizens may become subject in the context of EU migration. The policies of heightened conditionality are enforced in parallel with affirmative policies encouraging young EU citizens' endeavours to develop their employability through mobility. While the discourse of employability functions as a justification for the unpaid labour options offered within the EU mobility programmes, the Member States' restrictive policies actually tend to exclude these types of labour from their definitions of 'effective and genuine work' deemed to trigger rights under EU citizenship (see Leonardi and Chertkovskaya, 2017; O'Brien et al., 2016). Instead, young EU migrants themselves are made accountable for not having done enough to become 'employable'. Paradoxically, the study shows how the barriers to rights the young EU migrants face are actually apt to hamper their efforts to develop their employability and hinder their access to more stable and independent socio-occupational positions to which their rights are increasingly tied.

Second, I want to underline the inequality emerging as a consequence of the above-described transformations. For its part, the study answers to the call of Vallas and Christin (2017) for more comparative empirical work exposing the different ways in which neoliberalism unfolds depending on the structural arrangements in different national contexts. Crucially, the multi-contextual research setting allowed me to show how the young EU migrants who participated in this study were exposed to personal responsibility and precarity in both similar and unequal ways. The study contributes to a better understanding of the complex institutional context in which the social rights of EU migrants are determined. While interrogating the idea that welfare states would be of little importance for young EU migrants due to their age and lack of obligations (Engbersen and Snel, 2013; see Lulle et al., 2019), the study addresses the interaction of different European welfare regimes in conditioning the material conditions and labour market outcomes of EU migrants from different origins. The tripartite approach to welfare conditionality, which we develop in Article II, is useful in demonstrating how the restrictive conditionality imposed on EU migrants' rights, along with workfarist welfare policies more generally, has augmented labour market

discipline over young southern Europeans in particular, increasing their exposure to precarious work and therefore hindering their attempts to achieve self-sufficient incomes. While the southern European participants of the study arguably could have faced similar obstacles even if they had never migrated, their vulnerability appeared accentuated in the context of mobility, where their reluctance and/or inability to depend on their geographically distant families often left them directly exposed to the whims of the labour market. Partly for the same reason, they appeared to be particularly vulnerable to policies and administrative practices that produce precarious citizenship.

The third key aspect of the results I wish to highlight is indeed the emergence of precarious citizenship in this context. While the reasons for which young EU migrants enter precarious employment are intricate, the study proposes that the various supply- and demand-side factors identified in previous literature should be complemented by the possible insecurities related to EU migrants' legal status, especially when their migration takes place in conditions of precarious labour. It is striking that conditions such as 'illegality' and deportability arise as explanatory variables in a study on the free mobility of EU citizens. Nevertheless, in Article I, I argue that, under the conditions of precarious employment, not even migrants who, in global terms, have privileged access to formal citizenship rights are protected from processes of boundary enforcement that produce precarious citizenship. Even if, for EU migrants, precarious citizenship is not likely to become as persistent and definitive a state as it is for many other migrants and stateless populations (see Lori, 2017: 747-748), the research should not overlook the more 'privileged' types of migration when seeking to map the spread and implications of precarious citizenship around the globe. This study has paid particular attention to the role of institutional actors in enforcing the conditionality and temporariness of migrants' ability to occupy a status, taking inspiration from the work of Landolt and Goldring (2016) in the Canadian context. The specific contribution to sociology of work literature here lies in developing the theoretical understanding of precariousness in its embeddedness in institutional processes and micro-level interactions in this complex legal and policy environment (see Alberti et al., 2018).

Finally, this study offers empirical evidence of the ways in which the dynamics of control in neoliberal regimes throw conceptions of individual autonomy into question (McNay, 2009). Although the study is critical about the idea that young EU migrants would be inherently flexible in a way that would intrinsically motivate them to participate in the precarious labour market (see McCollum and Findlay, 2015: 436), it shows how the participants had internalised the neoliberal imperatives of self-development and flexibility, and that this centrally influenced their choices regarding work and mobility (see Bradley and Devadason, 2008). Indeed, their narratives reflect the contemporary ideal that every person should be autonomous and

entrepreneurial and strive for personal fulfilment, and the conception of work as the central means to achieve fulfilment and experience meaningful subjectivity (Rose, 1998; Weeks, 2011). Yet, as Rose (1999) argues, freedom can function as a resource for governing the passions of individuals imagined as autonomous, free and freely choosing. While highlighting the relationship between EU mobility policies and young migrants' passionate attachment to work (Farrugia, 2019; Havering, 2011), the analysis also displays passion as yet another factor that helps us to understand what compels young, highly educated EU citizens to bear precarious working and living conditions in other EU countries. Even though their EU citizenship offers them relative freedom to make use of mobility to leave degrading jobs (Alberti, 2014), the study shows, from its multi-contextual perspective, how this freedom has both structural and subjective limitations and is not distributed equally.

5. WHY DO WE NEED CRITICAL RESEARCH ON EU MIGRATION?

The environment in which young EU citizens make use of their right to free movement in the EU is changing. This dissertation addresses the gap between the expectations young EU migrants may have regarding the opportunities existing within the area of free movement and the actual realities they may confront in their destination country. The qualitatively comparative and cross-disciplinary approaches I have put forward in this study have allowed me to investigate the participants' lived experiences in the context of major social-structural transformations, powerful discourses and diverse forms of governance under neoliberalism. The study reveals how citizenship is becoming more precarious, not only for citizens and for migrants (Lori, 2017; Somers, 2008), but also for the EU 'migrant citizens' who often unknowingly expose themselves to the evolving national and supranational legal frameworks within which their rights are increasingly in peril. The study thus joins the project of methodological de-nationalism (Anderson, 2019) in critical migration research, highlighting the ambiguous and moving boundaries of EU citizenship that become apparent in conditions of precarious labour.

In this dissertation I propose that we need to develop critical research on intra-EU migration due to these consequential changes related to both the labour market and the institutional environment in which young EU migrants move, as well as the interplay between the two. In particular, I claim that applying and developing the concept of precarity from a cross-disciplinary perspective is fruitful in grasping how the changes in the social, political-institutional and economic environment connect with young migrants' subjective aspirations, passions and experiences (see Paret and Gleeson, 2016). At a time when the economic toll of the COVID-19 pandemic is rapidly eroding labour market conditions for young workers, this task remains as critical as ever.

The three articles of the dissertation propose new conceptual tools that advance critical research on EU migration in various fields of study. They all illustrate, from their different perspectives, the ambivalence of autonomy and compulsion in the context of 'free' movement of young workers. While analysing the participants' room for making choices regarding mobility and for acting upon their precarious conditions, the study highlights how hegemonic discourses and policies informed by neoliberalism influence their autonomy. Overall, the dissertation provides evidence of the ways in which neoliberalism traverses the processes through which young EU migrants are

rendered vulnerable to precarity by moulding welfare, migration, and mobility regimes and their subjectivities as workers, citizens and migrants. I argue that understanding how these dynamics play out in this context is indeed central to understanding young EU migrants' acquiescence to precarious working and living conditions.

While issues of inequality have been largely absent from research on EU migration (Varriale, 2018), the qualitative comparative analysis in the multi-contextual setting of the study has allowed me to analyse the complex institutional drivers of the emergent disparities in this context. In particular, I suggest that in this ostensibly privileged environment we should pay much closer attention to material realities of migration – to put it bluntly, the issue of money – to understand how they structure the opportunities and constraints of free mobility. It is important to highlight that the inequalities identified in this study are not only relative to the participants' age, but also that age here intersects with other attributes including their nationality and social background. Researchers analysing intra-EU migration have often considered it important to highlight how EU labour migrants typically do not resort to applying for welfare benefits in their destination countries, possibly to oppose political arguments that the abuse of welfare systems would be widespread among this group (e.g. Zimmerman, 2014). However, this has often led to a lack of attention to the reasons behind, and consequences of, not engaging with the welfare systems in real situations. The demonstrated fact that the knowledge of more generous welfare benefits is typically of minimal importance in the decision-making regarding intra-EU migration (e.g. Ehata and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2017) does not remove the possibility that EU migrants may be factually in need of social protection in their destination country, especially when precariously employed. Thus, departing from the arguments that downplay the role of welfare systems for this group, in my study I maintain that their role is central in structuring the transitions of young workers within the intra-European labour markets.

Yet, although acknowledging the crucial importance of money, this study is nevertheless critical of the dominant conception of EU migration being driven chiefly by economic motivations and the search for achievement articulated in terms of social mobility (see Bygnes, 2015; see Varriale, 2019). Conceptualising young EU citizens' precarious migration as lived neoliberal subjectivity has helped me to show its connections to the hegemonic imperatives of self-development, flexibility and self-responsibility, as well as the contemporary ideals of work as a source of self-fulfilment. Here, as well, the concept of precarity proves to be useful in showing how the structural conditions interweave with young migrants' passions and desires, rendering them into a workforce adaptable to the requirements of the precarious labour markets (Lorey, 2006; Vallas and Christin, 2017).

Importantly, experiencing precarity in the context of mobility may have specific kinds of implications for young people's lives. Ultimately this dissertation tells a story of young people whose optimism, efforts and struggles were not always rewarded. While the study does not systematically answer the question of whether its participants eventually landed more stable jobs – or ones that corresponded to their passions – the data however indicates that protracted precarity in many cases had negative implications for their careers, their life-transitions, their wellbeing, and even their health. To be sure, more positive stories of intra-EU migration can easily be found. Nevertheless, acknowledging the implications and institutional drivers of precarity and inequality in this context opens important perspectives for future critical research on EU migration.

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APPENDIX 2. The interview structure

THE INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

A) Free narrative

- Could you please tell me, in your own words, what has happened in your life since you graduated from higher education? You can be as detailed as you want. What did you do before moving to Brussels and how did you end up here?

Questions to support storytelling if necessary:

- Can you still remember what kind of plans or dreams you had right after finishing your studies?
- What kind of expectations did you have when you moved here?
- Was it difficult or easy to take the decision to move here? What made it difficult/easy?
- We have here your CV. Could you please tell me more about your work history? (Could you tell me a bit more about this traineeship/training/work relation? What kind of expectations did you have? How was it? Why and how did it end?)
- Have you had other jobs that do not appear in your CV? Could you please tell me about them?

B) Semi-structured questions on the research themes

The city and its labour market

- Could you tell me more about your life here in Brussels? What kind of place is this to live in?

- How would you describe the working life in Brussels – compared to other places where you have worked?

Unemployment and subsistence

- What kind of experience has unemployment been for you in these places?
- Economically speaking, how have you got along here in Brussels?
- What kind of safety nets do you have in your life?

Bureaucratic encounters/ encounters in the job market

- Could you tell me more about your experiences here in Brussels? What kind of situations have you faced while searching for jobs and working here? What kind of encounters have you had with employers, with colleagues, with the administration...?
- How did you feel in those situations? How did you act?

Position and rights

- In your own view, what kind of position do you have in the Belgian job market?
- Could you name some factors that you believe affect your position?
- What do you think about your position in relation to the education and skills you have acquired?
- Could you estimate how well you know your rights as a foreigner working or searching for a job in Belgium?
- Could you think of some examples of the rights you have?

- Could you think of some situations in which these rights were not known or not recognised?

Future

- Generally speaking, how is your life situation at the moment?
- How do you see your future?
- Are you able to imagine where you will live and what you will do in five years? How about in ten years?
- Where would you like to live and what would you like to do then?
- Do you have some other plans, hopes or dreams? Could you tell me about them?

Closing

- These were all my questions. Is there anything else you would consider important to tell?
- Is there something you would like to ask me? Would you like to comment on the interview?

